

MODERN AMERICAN
SHORT STORIES

MODERN AMERICAN SHORT STORIES

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To Richard Connell for "A Friend of Napoleon."

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PREFACE

No other subject of the high school curriculum offers greater opportunity for enjoyment, both for teacher and student, as does the short story. The following stories were selected with that thought in mind. English rightly has a prominent place in the lists of school subjects, and with the continued extension in the scope of literature to present to students, there comes an opportunity to increase the enjoyment that can be derived from the short story in the English class.

In the past years the tendency has been to tell pupils what they must read. It made no difference whether or not the type of literature selected interested the student. The stories here included will interest the average high school boy and girl. During the past few years, in the editor's own classes, some thousand odd representative pupils have attested to that fact. In practically all cases the stories have been thoroughly studied in the class room. The students have evinced their interest and suggested other stories by the same authors, or of like nature, on which they could report in class.

These stories have been chosen to illustrate diverse types of short stories—some obtaining their merit from smoothness of plot; others from beauty of theme and language; and still others from a skillful portrayal of character. It has been the aim to present a wide variety of settings and backgrounds, in order to convey some insight into contrasting lives and modes of living.

The field of the modern short story is so extensive and so full of reading matter of various kinds, that the paramount duty of high school English teachers is to instruct young people as to what is

good and why it is good. Convince the student that the good is more interesting than the poor. A problem is sure to arise here, for students are bound to read cheap and sensational stories. The problem becomes more acute with the realization that desirable and undesirable types of stories exist together in the same magazines. In an effort to direct reading into the desired channels, the teacher will probably do well to ignore the sensational story and stress the interesting points of the good story.

The more the student knows of a personal nature about an author, the more interested the student becomes in reading other stories by that same author. With this thought in mind authors have been asked to give, and for the most part have very obligingly co-operated in furnishing, that particular information about their lives which bears relation to the story included. The biographical material is intended to stimulate the interest of the students in the writer.

It is probably true that many students do not know where to find good things to read. It may be that by introducing an author to a pupil, one is opening to him a new source of benefit and enjoyment. Further new and good reading will be discovered by the pupil upon his own initiative.

Copyright mention is made of each story. In addition, the editor would express his thanks to the many authors who have gone to such pains and trouble to furnish the information requested. In particular, the editor is indebted to Mr. Matthew J. Donner of the faculty of the West Side High School, Newark, N. J., for his genuine interest and valuable co-operation, and to Mr. Sanger M. Cook, of Main Central Institute, Pittsfield, Maine, and to Mr. Frank Hamlen, of Bulkeley School, New London, Conn.

T. R. C.

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INTRODUCTION

Dr. Charles Eliot once said that the summer camp for boys and girls is the distinctive contribution of America to education. No feature of the camp program is more appreciated than the evening camp fire. And no camp fire is complete without several good stories. Campers need not be urged to attend the evening conclave, particularly when it is known that good stories are to be told by accomplished storytellers.

Certainly no camper has ever forgotten the occasion when several hundred boys or girls gathered around the camp fire, intent as the story-teller narrated stirring adventures and thrilling mysteries. It is such an atmosphere of voluntary enjoyment that we wish to introduce into our class rooms. We believe that this atmosphere can best be introduced by means of the short story.

For the short story is an interesting form of classroom entertainment and instruction. When has a teacher ever said, "I have a story to tell," that the class has not hastily filled in the front seats and bestowed the most flattering attention?

High school students have, of course, read many stories. Do they ever stop to think why a story is good, why they liked it? One of three things makes a short story interesting to its readers: either the characters appeal, the plot is good, or there is an interest in the setting that holds attention. In the stories included here, all three of these factors enter.

Some of the stories may contain only one of the three, but that one is good enough to interest. In other of the stories will be found two of the factors combined; and in many cases, all three. As the tales are read, it should be decided which of these factors best applies to each story.

Perhaps heretofore, the novel has been of dominant interest in fiction. If so, it may be said that there is little comparison between writing a novel and writing a short story. Time and skill and wide knowledge of a subject are required to write a good novel. But it takes a highly specialized art to tell a story. The author of a short story must confine himself to one main thought, and place all other thoughts in subordination. He must win the interest and attention of his reader almost at once, for he has only a short time in which to make the desired impression.

Edgar Allan Poe was the first to discover these facts, and to produce the earliest of modern short stories as we now recognize them. But the short story itself goes farther back into the past than Poe or any of his predecessors. We might say that story-telling began with the earliest community life, when man left his caves and took to living in harmony with small groups of his fellows. Long before the time of writing, tales of great deeds of adventure and of wonders performed by the gods were passed down orally from one generation to the next. With the invention of writing, a record of these legends was kept on papyri, the paper of the ancient Egyptians. "Tales of the Magicians," episodes of adventures in war, constitute the earliest written stories known to man, probably dating back at least to the year 5000 B. C.

From this very ancient date, it is possible to trace

the history of the short story step by step through the records of achievements of each succeeding nation as it came into power. The wanderings of Odysseus and his many adventures, the various books of the Bible, Virgil's "Æneid," and "Ovid" bring the short story to the period of the Middle Ages. The close of this period in the fourteenth century, finds Chaucer writing his "Canterbury Tales." These tales, with their portrayal of medieval life, illustrate many modern features of the short story.

Not much change takes place now for about four centuries, when Addison and Steele's *Spectator* ushers in an age of magazine fiction. The magazine offered an opportunity to have the story readily published and handily distributed among the many interested readers it soon found.

Now we turn to America and Poe. With the appearance of his tales, distinct changes came in the methods of short story writing. From his style, which has been widely copied and closely adhered to, we gather a definition for the short story: a narrative that has every appearance of being true, that is not so long but that it can be read at a single sitting of not over three hours, that produces one main idea and excludes all that does not pertain to that one single impression.

Following Poe, the field for the short story shifted to France, where Maupassant and Daudet combined to increase the literary value and interest in this form of art.

Modern writers of the short story have progressed far in the past few years. The influence of the old acknowledged masters of this field is evident, but does not dominate. There is a freedom of style in the stories now being given to us that speaks

for a constantly broadening outlook and an even more interesting future for the short story.

Here is a book of short stories that high school boys and girls will want to read. It is as though the teacher were saying, "I have a story to tell." But instead of the teacher, we have some of the acknowledged best authors of today who tell their stories. And it will be found that each one has something well worth telling. Hence a pleasure awaits every boy and girl into whose hands this book falls. And any group of young people, entering upon the study of this book, should smile at the word "study," and adopt in its place some word that means pleasure.

The first author to tell his story is Booth Tarkington, well known to American boys and girls. Surely a story of Penrod cannot fail to catch the immediate interest of any youthful reader. In "Penrod's Busy Day" we get another glimpse of that enterprising juvenile whose versatility has never been fully appreciated by his family. With "Penrod," Booth Tarkington has reached the high water mark of his brilliant literary career.

The second story, "All or Nothing," is undoubtedly one of the best stories which Charles Caldwell Dobie has written. Its dominating interest lies in the temperament of the main character. Anson Carr inherits a large sum of money. A slight technicality exists as to whether the fortune is honestly his. After taking every effort to suppress the only existing evidence that might stand between him and his possession of the riches, Carr finds that the conflict between right and wrong continues to disturb his peace of mind. The influences brought to bear upon his decision form a highly interesting plot.

While in the employ of the Government as a so-

cial research worker among the homesteaders of the Western frontier, Viola Paradise learned of the sad fate of two Eastern school teachers, new to the hardships of the Western climate. Left alone in their own surroundings, and apparently well supplied with all necessities, the young ladies found themselves without matches, the lack of which cost them their lives. From this tragic incident, Miss Paradise has written a strong story called "Matches"—injecting into the fiction version a thread of romance and a happy ending, while losing none of the stark realism of the harsh Western atmosphere.

The story of an athletic event holds a particular delight for young American readers. Lawrence Perry's "A Matter of Loyalty" is such a story. If we consider carefully the descriptions and associations, we discover that Mr. Perry is really reporting the annual Harvard-Yale boat race on the Thames River at New London, Conn. The fight of the hero to win a place in the shell, a minor love interest, and the struggle of the hero in choosing between loyalty to his father and loyalty to his college are complications added to the main theme to make a plot.

The picture of a character beset by every vicissitude of fate holds an awful interest for the rest of humanity. Wilbur Daniel Steele, in "Footfalls," shows us such a man. A blind cobbler overcomes his great physical handicap: he prospers in his business and gathers to his shop the life and youth of the town. But fate is relentless to the cobbler. A new catastrophe strikes him: every circumstantial evidence points to his son as a thief and a murderer. Plot and character description in this story make it worthy of inclusion among the best, but it is by atmosphere, at the creation of which Mr. Steele is a

true master, that the greatest effect in "Footfalls" is gained.

Most of us can remember at least one great phobia which has made life miserable for us. But most of us have not been obliged to overcome our phobias in such a tempestuous environment as did Enderby in "Gulliver the Great" by Walter A. Dyer. Harassed by the new fear of being swept from his raft in mid-ocean, Enderby saw his greatest fear give rise to love—love for the Great Dane which had shared his dangers at sea.

The only substitute for wide travel is extensive reading. We may not find it possible to visit strange lands and view quaint customs, but we can enjoy reading about these things. Dorothy Canfield Fisher is an experienced traveler, and with the gift of the natural writer she brings her experiences vividly to her readers. Her tales of the Basque country offer divertisement to all classes of readers.

No age has manifested a deeper interest in the personality of Lincoln than has our own time. Sometimes one wonders if the historians or the writers of fiction have given us the better picture of Lincoln. Mrs. Honoré Willsie Morrow has achieved at once in "The Lost Speech" both the goal of the historian and that of the fiction writer. Here we see Lincoln as the peacemaker, as well as the matchless politician and orator. At the time of the formation of the new Republican party, when harmony was essential, he induced by the sheer force of his personality the most unlikely people to compromise and even to make great sacrifices. His speech at the convention—lost to the world—showed the hidden depth and genius of a nature destined to preserve and reunite a nation.

Thomas Boyd's "Ohio Fable" affords much op-

portunity for thought. It is somewhat difficult to classify the story. For if Mr. Boyd has written a fable, one wonders what lesson it teaches. Quite likely the author had in mind merely a story of Ohio life written to illustrate time, conditions and character of this section of the country. The problem that arises as the story reaches its sudden ending, presents an opportunity for interesting character study and lively class discussion. The story is well written, and because it is unique is given a place in this volume.

"A Friend," by Elsie Singmaster, appears next in this collection. Mrs. Lewars very kindly selected this, a story of a high school girl, from all of her uniformly excellent writings as the one best suited to this collection. "I have selected this story," she writes, "because of the age and occupation of its heroine, and because it will, I hope, amuse."

The gypsy as he is known in America does not enjoy a favorable reputation. Nevertheless, the wandering tribes which present a problem to the police of our cities and cause people in our rural communities to have apprehension for their property, have come from a romantic European stock. Konrad Bercovici knows the secrets of the Rumanian gypsies as does no other writer in America. His story, "Vlad's Son," pictures our familiar trouble-making gypsy in his original environment, and presents a fascinating story of Rumanian gypsy romance that arouses our sympathy and interest in these wandering tribes.

According to Hugh MacNair Kahler, no one appreciates the greatest handicap of a night watchman. Al Porson, the chief character of "Talk," has the gregarious instinct in highly developed form—and as a night watchman he thirsts for conversation. By

a remarkable series of incidences, Mr. Porson becomes possessed of a thousand dollars. He spurns the job which goes with the money, and decides to buy the village barber shop—not because he loves to barber, but because he loves to talk. The story is not so remarkable for its plot as for the humorous manner in which Mr. Kahler portrays the idiosyncrasies of the village characters.

“Annie Laurie,” by Zona Gale, is a love story of a different type. Through the daughter, returning to the scene of her mother’s youth, the tale of the love existing between Martin Lowe and Marian is unwound. Martin Lowe, left behind on a barren farm while the girl he loved found fame in the art to which they both aspired, is compensated through Marian’s daughter for some of the happiness which life had denied him. The delicacy which characterizes Zona Gale’s work is never more apparent than in “Annie Laurie.”

There have been many stories written about unfortunate children homeless on Christmas Eve, and many stories written about orphans; but most of these have reeked with such intense sentimentality that they have proved offensive to the reader. Without sentimentality, but with real feeling, Barry Benefield tells a pretty little tale of two orphans in his story, “Christmas Eve’s Day.” With a fine understanding of the southern mountain folk, Mr. Benefield presents twelve-year-old Kilmer and his younger sister, Peruna. Recently orphaned and temporarily adopted by strangers, the children learn of plans to separate them. Taking matters into his own hands, Kilmer sets out with Peruna to seek a new refuge. Christmas Eve finds him faced with the problem of providing not only shelter, but Christ-

mas gifts for his little sister. And the brave little boy is rewarded—for the Saint in whom he places his trust does not disappoint him, but visits the child in a dream—a dream so wondrous that the faith of the children finds nothing to doubt. This dream is described by Mr. Benefield with rare beauty and loveliness.

Always unusual and replete with unique situations are the stories of Richard Connell, and to this rule "A Friend of Napoleon" is no exception. Little Papa Chibou has lived so long with his wax dummies that to him their world has become the real one and existence outside the Musée is something unreal. One sad, lonely figure makes a particular appeal to the tender heart of Papa Chibou, and in Napoleon Bonaparte the little watchman finds his closest friend and confidant. His devotion to the great emperor, of whose fame Papa Chibou was innocently unaware, is the theme for a story of unusual appeal.

"A Use for Clods" is just the type of story we expect from the pen of Ben Ames Williams. To boys especially this story will appeal, for the theme is one to grip the imagination of youth. Van Wert, a young Princeton graduate seeking adventure in the great Maine woods, discovers beneath the rough exteriors of common woodsmen traits of character as noble as any encountered in the more refined circles of his former associates. These woodsmen he has called "clods," but in a time of grave danger, Van Wert learns that there is a "Use for Clods."

With the new importance in literature of the American negro story, no collection is complete without a representative of this type. "Bulldog," by Roger Daniels, is a story of a criminal, a man out of the grasp of the law only long enough to fall back

into it again. But of this criminal, the author has made a hero. His offences are the result of a primitive mind and a lack of inhibitions, rather than the result of a vicious nature. The happy disposition of Bulldog, manifested in innumerable ways, arouses sympathy in the minds of all who come in contact with this powerful negro.

In the next story, "The True Romance," Albert Payson Terhune presents another of his popular tales about dogs. With Gareth, the youthful hero of "The True Romance," Gyp, the Doberman pinscher, shares honors. The story centers about the devotion of a small boy to a young lady of beauty and charm, whom he endows in his imagination with all the qualities to be found in the heroines of King Arthur's legends.

Six women members of a "Lunch Club," entertaining a distinguished novelist, is the situation about which Edith Wharton writes her remarkable story, "Xingu." The charm of the story lies in the subtle humor, expressed in its author's inimitable manner. The six ladies, pursuing Culture "in a band, as though it were dangerous to meet alone," afford Mrs. Wharton an opportunity for delightful satire. One feels that Mrs. Wharton knows "Lunch Clubs."

Robert H. Davis, in the New York *Herald* in 1922, published an account of a dinner in New York, attended by ten literary men—editors, critics, readers, and writers. During a discussion which arose as to the respective and comparative merits of contemporaneous popular writers, a vote was taken of the first, second and third choices in seven specified fields of literary endeavor. When the results were compared, it was found that to Irvin S. Cobb was awarded first place in five of these seven fields, with

second place in the two remaining. From "Snake Doctor," it may easily be seen why it was that Mr. Cobb was accorded first place as the writer of tales of horror. This gripping tale received the added distinction of the "O. Henry Memorial" prize award for the best short story of 1922.

These twenty stories, gleaned from the lists of the leading short story writers of our own day, represent tales of modern life, and methods of present-day writing and thinking. Students reading the current magazines will find these same authors contributing monthly to the leading periodicals. This is a further reason why it should be of interest to know something about the lives of these writers. The biographies preceding each story contain this information, while the titles of other stories by the same authors are also suggested. In the back of the book will be found the titles of volumes of short stories for outside reading, while the following list, composed of good and interesting stories, is recommended also.

RECOMMENDED READING LIST

Abdullah, Achmed:	Cobbler's Wax
Adams, "Bill":	Jukes—Make Way for a Sailor
Aldrich, Thomas Bailey:	Mademoiselle Olympe Zabriski
Anderson, Sherwood:	I'm a Fool
Anthony, Joseph:	Bandy-Legs
Aumonier, Stacy:	A Source of Irritation
Bailey, Temple:	White Birches
Benefield, Barry:	Down Bayou Dubac
	With Banners Blowing
Bercovici, Konrad:	Beggar of Alcazar
Bierce, Ambrose:	A Horseman in the Sky
Bradford, Roark:	Child of God.
Bromfield, Louis:	Let's Go to Hinky-Dink's
	Justice

INTRODUCTION

Brown, Katherine Holland:	Those Scars
Burtis, Thompson:	A Man-Made Mutiny
Canby, Henry Seidel:	Best Bait for Mosquitoes
Cobb, Irvin S.:	Belled Buzzard — Smart Alec — Words and Music
Cohen, Octavus Roy:	Fight That Failed — Not Wisely but Too Well—To Love and to Honor
Collins, Wilkie:	A Terribly Strange Bed
Connell, Richard:	The Most Dangerous Game
Conrad, Joseph:	Youth
Curwood, James Oliver:	His First Penitent
Derieux, Samuel:	The Sixth Shot
Davis, Richard Harding:	Gallegher—On the Fever Ship
Douglas, Marjorie Stoneham:	He-Man
Ferber, Edna:	April 25th, As Usual—Gay Old Dog
Fitzgerald, F. Scott:	Two for a Cent—One of My Old- est Friends
Foote, John Traintor:	Opus 43, No. 6
Freeman, Mary E. Wilkins:	Revolt of Mother
Galsworthy, John:	Told by the Schoolmaster
Gilman, Charlotte Perkins:	The Yellow Wall Paper
Glaspell, Susan:	A Jury of Her Peers
Hemingway, Ernest:	My Old Man
Hergesheimer, Joseph:	Tol'able David The Token
Hurst, Fannie:	She Walks in Beauty
Jacobs, W. W.:	The Monkey's Paw
Kahler, Hugh MacNair:	The Buckpasser
Kipling, Rudyard:	Monti Guj, Mutineer
Kyne, Peter B.:	The Star-Spangled Banner
Lardner, Ring:	Golden Honeymoon—Horseshoes —Haircut
Lefevre, Edwin:	The Woman and Her Bonds
Lemmon, Robert S.:	The Bamboo Trap
Loomis, Alfred F.:	A Plain Tale of the Sea
Marshall, Edison:	Heart of Little Shikara
deMaupassant, Guy:	The Necklace—A Piece of String
Morris, Gouvenuer:	A Postscript to Divorce
Norris, Kathleen:	Miracle Workers

Oppenheim, E. Phillips:	The Bamboozling of M. Gascoigne
Paine, Ralph D.:	The Last Pilot Schooner
	Freshman Fullback
Paynter, Ernest:	Maskee
Post, Melville D.:	Five Thousand Dollars Reward
Robbins, L. H.:	Mr. Downey Sits Down
	Prof. Todd's Used Car
Sherwood, Margaret:	The Clearest Voice
Sinclair, Bertrand:	Longhorn and Shorthorn
Singmaster, Elsie:	The Steamer Child
Steele, Wilbur Daniel:	Yellow Cat
	Down on Their Knees
	White Horse Winter
Stern, G. B.:	The Island Game
Stockton, Francis Richard:	The Lady or the Tiger?
	The Widow's Cruise
Strindberg, August:	Love and Bread
Tarkington, Booth:	Mary Smith
	Mrs. Bender and Napoleon
Wells, H. G.:	The Red Room
Wetjen, Albert:	Strain
Williams, Ben Ames:	Solitude
Wood, Frances Gilchrist:	Turkey Red
Yeziarska, Anzia:	Fat of the Land

PENROD'S BUSY DAY

BY

BOOTH TARKINGTON

NEWTON BOOTH TARKINGTON

(1869—)

There are probably few boys and girls in America who are not familiar with the name of Booth Tarkington, and with his much-loved Penrod. As a portrayer of youthful American life, Mr. Tarkington has no equal to-day. His fiction deals mainly with the adolescent age, and he treats his subject in a gentle and wistful manner, catching as no other writer does the glamour of lovely innocence. Usually humorous, his stories are also poignantly sad, for they convey the unspoiled outlook of early youth, which must be lost in contacts with the realities of the world.

"Penrod," "Penrod and Sam," and "Seventeen" are episodes collected into volumes and loosely gathered into novel form, but it was as short stories that they first made their appearance. "Penrod's Busy Day" has been included in this collection as one of the best examples of Mr. Tarkington's humor and insight into the heart of this very typical American boy.

Booth Tarkington, unlike many of our authors, has no occupation save that of author. Having resolved upon his career, he devoted all of his time and energy to the attainment of success in this field. But for eight years after his graduation from college, discouragement and disappointment were his only reward. With his first accepted novel, "A Gentleman from Indiana," he took his place as a writer of distinction. Twice he has been awarded the Pulitzer Prize for the best American novel of the year—in 1918 for "The Magnificent Ambersons," and in 1921 for "Alice Adams."

Booth Tarkington was born in 1869 in Indianapolis, Indiana. He was the son of a family prominent for three generations in the affairs of Indiana. His father, John Stevenson Tarkington, was an infantry captain during the Civil War, a member of the state legislature, and a judge of the circuit court. His mother was Elizabeth Booth of California, sister of Newton Booth, once governor of California and later senator from that State. It was for this prominent man that Booth Tarkington was named. Mr. Tarkington received his education at Exeter Academy, Purdue University, and Princeton. His present home is in Indianapolis, but he spends a large part of his time at his summer place in Kennebunkport, Maine, where he has named his home The House that Penrod Built.

From his earliest successes through the long list of his short stories, novels, and plays, there is little to be found in the writings of Booth Tarkington that is not of interest to young people.

Other stories by Booth Tarkington:

A Reward of Merit	The Property Man
Fascinating Stranger	Little Strangers
The One Hundred Dollar Bill	Monsieur Beaucaire

Volumes of stories:

In the Arena	Penrod	Penrod and Sam	Seventeen
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PENROD'S BUSY DAY

Although the pressure had thus been relieved and Penrod found peace with himself, nevertheless there were times during the rest of that week when he felt a strong distaste for Margaret. His schoolmates frequently reminded him of such phrases in her letter as they seemed least able to forget, and for hours after each of these experiences he was unable to comport himself with human courtesy when constrained (as at dinner) to remain for any length of time in the same room with her. But by Sunday these moods had seemed to pass; he attended church in her close company, and had no thought of the troubles brought upon him by her correspondence with a person who throughout remained unknown to him.

Penrod slumped far down in the pew with his knees against the back of that in front, and he also languished to one side, so that the people sitting behind were afforded a view of him consisting of a little hair and one bored ear. The sermon—a noble one, searching and eloquent—was but a persistent sound in that ear, though, now and then, Penrod's attention would be caught by some detached portion of a sentence, when his mind would dwell dully upon the phrases for a little while—and lapse into a torpor. At

intervals his mother, without turning her head, would whisper, "Sit up, Penrod," causing him to sigh profoundly and move his shoulders about an inch, this mere gesture of compliance exhausting all the energy that remained to him.

The black backs and gray heads of the elderly men in the congregation oppressed him; they gave him a lethargic and indefinite feeling that he was immersed among lives of repellent dullness. But he should have been grateful to the lady with the artificial cherries upon her hat. His gaze lingered there, wandered away, and hopelessly returned again and again, to be a little refreshed by the glossy scarlet of the cluster of tiny globes. He was not so fortunate as to be drowsy; that would have brought him some relief—and yet, after a while, his eyes became slightly glazed; he saw dimly, and what he saw was distorted.

The church had been built in the early 'Seventies, and it contained some naïve stained glass of that period. The arch at the top of a window facing Penrod was filled with a gigantic Eye. Of oyster-white and raw blues and reds, inflamed by the pouring sun, it had held an awful place in the infantile life of Penrod Schofield, for in his tenderer years he accepted it without question as the literal Eye of Deity. He had been informed that the church was the divine dwelling—and there was the Eye!

Nowadays, being no longer a little child, he had somehow come to know better without being told, and though the great flaming Eye was no longer the terrifying thing it had been to him during his childhood, it nevertheless retained something of its ominous character. It made him feel spied upon, and its awful glare still pursued him, sometimes, as he was

falling asleep at night. When he faced the window his feeling was one of dull resentment.

His own glazed eyes, becoming slightly crossed with an *ennui* which was peculiarly intense this morning, rendered the Eye more monstrous than it was. It expanded to horrible size, growing mountainous; it turned into a volcano in the tropics, and yet it stared at him, indubitably an Eye implacably hostile to all rights of privacy forever. Penrod blinked and clinched his eyelids to be rid of this dual image, and he managed to shake off the volcano. Then, lowering the angle of his glance, he saw something most remarkable—and curiously out of place.

An inverted white soup-plate was lying miraculously balanced upon the back of a pew a little distance in front of him, and upon the upturned bottom of the soup plate was a brown coconut. Mildly surprised, Penrod yawned, and, in the effort to straighten his eyes, came to life temporarily. The coconut was revealed as Georgie Bassett's head, and the soup-plate as Georgie's white collar. Georgie was sitting up straight, as he always did in church, and Penrod found this vertical rectitude unpleasant. He knew that he had more to fear from the Eye than Georgie had, and he was under the impression (a correct one) that Georgie felt on intimate terms with it and was actually fond of it.

Penrod himself would have maintained that he was fond of it, if he had been asked. He would have said so because he feared to say otherwise; and the truth is that he never consciously looked at the Eye disrespectfully. He would have been alarmed if he thought the Eye had any way of finding out how he really felt about it. When not off his guard, he always looked at it placatively.

By and by, he sagged so far to the left that he had symptoms of a "stitch in the side," and, rousing himself, sat partially straight for several moments. Then he rubbed his shoulders slowly from side to side against the back of the seat, until his mother whispered, "Don't do that, Penrod."

Upon this, he allowed himself to slump inwardly till the curve in the back of his neck rested against the curved top of the back of the seat. It was a congenial fit, and Penrod again began to move slowly from side to side, finding the friction soothing. Even so slight a pleasure was denied him by a husky, "Stop that!" from his father.

Penrod sighed, and slid farther down. He scratched his head, his left knee, his right biceps, and his left ankle, after which he scratched his right knee, his right ankle, and his left biceps. Then he said, "Oh, hum!" unconsciously, but so loudly that there was a reproving stir in the neighborhood of the Schofield pew, and his father looked at him angrily.

Finally, his nose began to trouble him. It itched, and after scratching it, he rubbed it harshly. Another "Stop that!" from his father proved of no avail, being greeted by a desperate-sounding whisper, "I *got* to!"

And, continuing to rub his nose with his right hand, Penrod began to search his pockets with his left. The quest proving fruitless, he rubbed his nose with his left hand and searched with his right. Then he abandoned his nose and searched feverishly with both hands, going through all of his pockets several times.

"What *do* you want?" whispered his mother.

But Margaret had divined his need, and she passed him her own handkerchief. This was both thought-

ful and thoughtless—the latter because Margaret was in the habit of thinking that she became faint in crowds, especially at the theater or in church, and she had just soaked her handkerchief with spirits of ammonia from a small phial which she carried in her muff.

Penrod hastily applied the handkerchief to his nose and even more hastily exploded. He sneezed stupendously; he choked, sneezed again, wept, passed into a light convulsion of coughing and sneezing together—a mergence of sound which attracted much attention—and, after a few recurrent spasms, convalesced into a condition marked by silent tears and only sporadic instances of sneezing.

By this time his family were unanimously scarlet—his father and mother with mortification, and Margaret with the effort to control the almost irresistible mirth which the struggles and vociferations of Penrod had inspired within her. And yet her heart misgave her, for his bloodshot and tearful eyes were fixed upon her from the first and remained upon her, even when half-blinded with his agony; and their expression—as terrible as that of the windowed Eye confronting her—was not for an instant to be misunderstood. Absolutely, he considered that she had handed him the ammonia-soaked handkerchief deliberately and with malice, and well she knew that no power on earth could now or at any time henceforth persuade him otherwise.

“Of course I didn’t mean it, Penrod,” she said, at the first opportunity upon their homeward way. “I didn’t notice—that is, I didn’t think—” Unfortunately for the effect of sincerity which she hoped to produce, her voice became tremulous and her shoulders moved suspiciously.

"Just you wait! You'll see!" he prophesied, in a voice now choking, not with ammonia, but with emotion. "Poison a person, and then laugh in his face!"

He spake no more until they had reached their own house, though she made some further futile efforts at explanation and apology.

And after brooding abysmally throughout the meal that followed, he disappeared from the sight of his family, having answered with one frightful look his mother's timid suggestion that it was almost time for Sunday-school. He retired to his eyry—the sawdust box in the empty stable—and there gave rein to his embittered imaginings, incidentally forming many plans for Margaret.

Most of these were much too elaborate, but one was so alluring that he dwelt upon it, working out the details with gloomy pleasure, even after he had perceived its defects. It involved a considerable postponement—in fact, until Margaret should have become the mother of a boy about Penrod's present age. This boy would be precisely like Georgie Bassett—Penrod conceived that as inevitable—and, like Georgie, he would be his mother's idol. Penrod meant to take him to church and force him to blow his nose with an ammonia-soaked handkerchief in the presence of the Eye and all the congregation.

Then Penrod intended to say to this boy, after church, "Well, that's exac'ly what your mother did to me, and if you don't like it, you better look out!"

And the real Penrod in the sawdust-box clenched his fists. "Come ahead, then!" he muttered. "You talk too much!" Whereupon, the Penrod of his dream gave Margaret's puny son a contemptuous thrashing under the eyes of his mother, who besought in vain for mercy. This plan was finally

dropped, not because of any lingering nepotism within Penrod, but because his injury called for action less belated.

One after another, he thought of impossible things; one after another, he thought of things merely inane and futile, for he was trying to do something beyond his power. Penrod was never brilliant, or even successful, save by inspiration.

At four o'clock he came into the house, still nebulous, and as he passed the open door of the library he heard a man's voice, not his father's.

"To me," said this voice, "the finest lines in all literature are those in Tennyson's 'Maud'—

" 'Had it lain for a century dead,
My dust would hear her and beat,
And blossom in purple and red,
There somewhere around near her feet.' "

"I think I have quoted correctly," continued the voice nervously, "but, at any rate, what I wished to—ah—say was that I often think of those—ah—words; but I never think of them without thinking of—of—of *you*. I—ah——"

The nervous voice paused, and Penrod took an oblique survey of the room, himself unobserved. Margaret was seated in an easy chair and her face was turned away from Penrod, so that her expression of the moment remained unknown to him. Facing her, and leaning toward her with perceptible emotion, was Mr. Claude Blakely—a young man with whom Penrod had no acquaintance, though he had seen him, was aware of his identity, and had heard speech between Mrs. Schofield and Margaret which indicated that Mr. Blakely had formed the habit of calling frequently at the house. This was a brilliantly

handsome young man; indeed, his face was so beautiful that even Penrod was able to perceive something about it which might be explicably pleasing—at least to women. And Penrod remembered that, on the last evening before Mr. Robert Williams's departure for college, Margaret had been peevish because Penrod had genially spent the greater portion of the evening with Robert and herself upon the porch. Margaret made it clear, later, that she strongly preferred to conduct her conversations with friends unassisted—and as Penrod listened to the faltering words of Mr. Claude Blakely, he felt instinctively that, in a certain contingency, Margaret's indignation would be even more severe today than on the former occasion.

Mr. Blakely coughed faintly and was able to continue.

"I mean to say that when I say that what Tennyson says—ah—seems to—to apply to—to a feeling about you——"

At this point, finding too little breath in himself to proceed, in spite of the fact that he had spoken in an almost inaudible tone, Mr. Blakely stopped again.

Something about this little scene was making a deep impression upon Penrod. What that impression was, he could not possibly have stated; but he had a sense of the imminence of a tender crisis, and he perceived that the piquancy of affairs in the library had reached a point which would brand an intentional interruption as the act of a cold-blooded ruffian. Suddenly it was as though a strong light shone upon him: he decided that it was Mr. Blakely who had told Margaret that her eyes were like blue stars in heaven—*this* was the person who had caused the hateful letter to be written! That decided Penrod; his inspiration, so long waited for, had come.

"I—I feel that perhaps I am not plain," said Mr. Blakely, and immediately became red, whereas he had been pale. He was at least modest enough about his looks to fear that Margaret might think he had referred to them. "I mean, not plain in another sense—that is, I mean not that *I* am not plain in saying what I mean to you—I mean, what you mean to *me*! I feel——"

This was the moment selected by Penrod. He walked carelessly into the library, inquiring in a loud, bluff voice:

"Has anybody seen my dog around here anywheres?"

Mr. Blakely had inclined himself so far toward Margaret, and he was sitting so near the edge of the chair, that only a really wonderful bit of instinctive gymnastics landed him upon his feet instead of upon his back. As for Margaret, she said, "Good gracious!" and regarded Penrod blankly.

"Well," said Penrod breezily, "I guess it's no use lookin' for him—he isn't anywheres around. I guess I'll sit down." Herewith, he sank into an easy chair, and remarked, as in comfortable explanation, "I'm kind of tired standin' up, anyway."

Even in this crisis, Margaret was a credit to her mother's training.

"Penrod, have you met Mr. Blakely?"

"What?"

Margaret primly performed the rite.

"Mr. Blakely, this is my little brother Penrod."

Mr. Blakely was understood to murmur, "How d'ye do?"

"I'm well," said Penrod.

Margaret bent a perplexed gaze upon him, and he saw that she had not divined his intentions, though

the expression of Mr. Blakely was already beginning to be a little compensation for the ammonia outrage. Then, as the protracted silence which followed the introduction began to be a severe strain upon all parties, Penrod felt called upon to relieve it.

"I didn't have anything much to do this afternoon, anyway," he said. And at that there leaped a spark in Margaret's eye; her expression became severe.

"You should have gone to Sunday-school," she told him crisply.

"Well, I didn't!" said Penrod, with a bitterness so significant of sufferings connected with religion, ammonia, and herself, that Margaret, after giving him a thoughtful look, concluded not to urge the point.

Mr. Blakely smiled pleasantly. "I was looking out of the window a minute ago," he said, "and I saw a dog run across the street and turn the corner."

"What kind of a lookin' dog was it?" Penrod inquired, with languor.

"Well," said Mr. Blakely, "it was a—it was a nice-looking dog."

"What color was he?"

"He was—ah—white. That is, I think——"

"It wasn't Duke," said Penrod. "Duke's kind of brownish-gray-like."

Mr. Blakely brightened.

"Yes, that was it," he said. "This dog I saw first had another dog with him—a brownish-gray dog."

"Little or big?" Penrod asked, without interest.

"Why, Duke's a little dog!" Margaret intervened. "Of *course*, if it was little, it must have been Duke."

"It *was* little," said Mr. Blakely too enthusiastically. "It was a little bit of a dog. I noticed it because it was so little."

"Couldn't 'a' been Duke, then," said Penrod. "Duke's a kind of a middle-sized dog." He yawned, and added: "I don't want him now. I want to stay in the house this afternoon, anyway. And it's better for Duke to be out in the fresh air."

Mr. Blakely coughed again and sat down, finding little to say. It was evident, also, that Margaret shared his perplexity; and another silence became so embarrassing that Penrod broke it.

"I was out in the sawdust-box," he said, "but it got kind of chilly." Neither of his auditors felt called upon to offer any comment, and presently he added, "I thought I better come in here where it's warmer."

"It's too warm," said Margaret, at once. "Mr. Blakely, would you mind opening a window?"

"By all means!" the young man responded earnestly, as he rose. "Maybe I'd better open two?"

"Yes," said Margaret; "that would be much better."

But Penrod watched Mr. Blakely open two windows to their widest, and betrayed no anxiety. His remarks upon the relative temperatures of the sawdust-box and the library had been made merely for the sake of creating sound in a silent place. When the windows had been open for several minutes, Penrod's placidity, though gloomy, denoted anything but discomfort from the draft, which was powerful, the day being windy.

It was Mr. Blakely's turn to break a silence, and he did it so unexpectedly that Margaret started. He sneezed.

"Perhaps—" Margaret began, but paused apprehensively. "Perhaps-per-per—" Her apprehensions became more and more poignant; her eyes

seemed fixed upon some incredible disaster; she appeared to inflate while the catastrophe she foresaw became more and more imminent. All at once she collapsed, but the power decorum had over her was attested by the mildness of her sneeze after so threatening a prelude.

"Perhaps I'd better put one of the windows down," Mr. Blakely suggested.

"Both, I believe," said Margaret. "The room has cooled off, now, I think."

Mr. Blakely closed the windows, and, returning to a chair near Margaret, did his share in the production of another long period of quiet. Penrod allowed this one to pass without any vocal disturbance on his part. It may be, however, that his gaze was disturbing to Mr. Blakely, upon whose person it was glassily fixed with a self-forgetfulness that was almost morbid.

"Didn't you enjoy the last meeting of the Cotillion Club?" Margaret said finally.

And upon Mr. Blakely's answer absently in the affirmative, she suddenly began to be talkative. He seemed to catch a meaning in her fluency, and followed her lead, a conversation ensuing which at first had all the outward signs of eagerness. They talked with warm interest of people and events unknown to Penrod; they laughed enthusiastically about things beyond his ken; they appeared to have arranged a perfect way to enjoy themselves, no matter whether he was with them or elsewhere—but presently their briskness began to slacken; the appearance of interest became perfunctory. Within ten minutes the few last scattering semblances of gayety had passed, and they lapsed into the longest and most profound of all their silences indoors that day. Its effect upon Pen-

rod was to make him yawn and settle himself in his chair.

Then Mr. Blakely, coming to the surface out of deep inward communings, snapped his finger against the palm of his hand impulsively.

"By George!" he exclaimed, under his breath.

"What is it?" Margaret asked. "Did you remember something?"

"No, it's nothing," he said. "Nothing at all. But, by the way, it seems a pity for you to be missing the fine weather. I wonder if I could persuade you to take a little walk?"

Margaret, somewhat to the surprise of both the gentlemen present, looked uncertain.

"I don't know——" she said.

Mr. Blakely saw that she missed his point.

"One can talk better in the open, don't you think?" he urged, with a significant glance toward Penrod.

Margaret also glanced keenly at Penrod. "Well, perhaps." And then, "I'll get my hat," she said.

Penrod was on his feet before she left the room. He stretched himself.

"I'll get mine, too," he said.

But he carefully went to find it in a direction different from that taken by his sister, and he joined her and her escort not till they were at the front door, whither Mr. Blakely—with a last flickering of hope—had urged a flight in haste.

"I been thinkin' of takin' a walk, all afternoon," said Penrod pompously. "Don't matter to me which way we go."

The exquisite oval of Mr. Claude Blakely's face merged into outlines more rugged than usual; the conformation of his jaw became perceptible, and it

could be seen that he had conceived an idea which was crystallizing into a determination.

"I believe it happens that this is our first walk together," he said to Margaret, as they reached the pavement, "but, from the kind of tennis you play, I judge that you could go a pretty good gait. Do you like walking fast?"

She nodded. "For exercise."

"Shall we try it then?"

"You set the pace," said Margaret. "I think I can keep up."

He took her at her word, and the amazing briskness of their start seemed a little sinister to Penrod, though he was convinced that he could do anything that Margaret could do, and also that neither she nor her comely friend could sustain such a speed for long. On the contrary, they actually increased it with each fleeting block they covered.

"Here!" he panted, when they had thus put something more than a half-mile behind them. "There isn't anybody has to have a doctor, I guess! What's the use our walkin' so fast?"

In truth, Penrod was not walking, for his shorter legs permitted no actual walking at such a speed; his gait was a half-trot.

"Oh, *we're* out for a *walk*!" Mr. Blakely returned, a note of gayety beginning to sound in his voice. "Marg—ah—Miss Schofield, keep your head up and breathe through your nose. That's it! You'll find I was right in suggesting this. It's going to turn out gloriously! Now, let's make it a little faster."

Margaret murmured inarticulately, for she would not waste her breath in a more coherent reply. Her cheeks were flushed; her eyes were brimming with

the wind, but when she looked at Penrod, they were brimming with something more. Gurgling sounds came from her.

Penrod's expression had become grim. He offered no second protest, mainly because he, likewise, would not waste his breath, and if he would, he could not. Of breath in the ordinary sense—breath, breathed automatically—he had none. He had only gasps to feed his straining lungs, and his half-trot, which had long since become a trot, was changed for a lope when Mr. Blakely reached his own best burst of speed.

And now people stared at the flying three. The gait of Margaret and Mr. Blakely could be called a walk only by courtesy, while Penrod's was becoming a kind of blind scamper. At times he zigzagged; other times, he fell behind, wobbling. Anon, with elbows flopping and his face sculptured like an antique mask, he would actually forge ahead, and then carom from one to the other of his companions as he fell back again.

Thus the trio sped through the coming of autumn dusk, outflying the fallen leaves that tumbled upon the wind. And still Penrod held to the task that he had set himself. The street lamps flickered into life, but on and on Claude Blakely led the lady, and on and on reeled the grim Penrod. Never once was he so far from them that they could have exchanged a word unchaperoned by his throbbing ear.

"Oh!" Margaret cried, and, halting suddenly, she draped herself about a lamp-post like a strip of bunting. "Guh-uh-guh-goodness!" she sobbed.

Penrod immediately drooped to the curb-stone, which he reached, by pure fortune, in a sitting position. Mr. Blakely leaned against a fence, and said

nothing, though his breathing was eloquent. "We—we must go—go home," Margaret gasped. "We must, if—if we can drag ourselves!"

Then Penrod showed them what mettle they had tried to crack. A paroxysm of coughing shook him; he spoke through it sobbingly:

"'Drag!'"S jus' lul-like a girl! Ha-why I walk—oof!—faster'n that every day—on my—way to school." He managed to subjugate a tendency to nausea. "What you—want to go—home for?" he said. "Le's go on!"

In the darkness Mr. Claude Blakely's expression could not be seen, nor was his voice heard. For these and other reasons, his opinions and sentiments may not be stated.

. . . Mrs. Schofield was looking rather anxiously forth from her front door when the two adult figures and the faithful smaller one came up the walk.

"I was getting uneasy," she said. "Papa and I came in and found the house empty. It's after seven. Oh, Mr. Blakely, is that you?"

"Good-evening," he said. "I fear I must be keeping an engagement. Good-night. Good-night, Miss Schofield."

"Good-night."

"Well, good-night," Penrod called, staring after him. But Mr. Blakely was already too far away to hear him, and a moment later Penrod followed his mother and sister into the house.

"I let Della go to church," Mrs. Schofield said to Margaret. "You and I might help Katie get supper."

"Not for a few minutes," Margaret returned gravely, looking at Penrod. "Come upstairs, mamma; I want to tell you something."

Penrod cackled hoarse triumph and defiance.

"Go on! Tell! What *I* care? You try to poison a person in church again, and then laugh in his face, you'll see what you get!"

But after his mother had retired with Margaret to the latter's room, he began to feel disturbed in spite of his firm belief that his cause was wholly that of justice victorious. Margaret had insidious ways of stating a case; and her point of view, no matter how absurd or unjust, was almost always adopted by Mr. and Mrs. Schofield in cases of controversy.

Penrod became uneasy. Perceiving himself to be in danger, he decided that certain measures were warranted. Unquestionably, it would be well to know beforehand in what terms Margaret would couch the charges which he supposed he must face in open court—that is to say, at the supper-table. He stole softly up the stairs, and, flattening himself against the wall, approached Margaret's door, which was about an inch ajar.

He heard his mother making sounds which appalled him—he took them for sobs. And then Margaret's voice rang out in a peal of insane laughter. Trembling, he crept nearer the door. Within the room Margaret was clinging to her mother, and both were trying to control their hilarity.

"He did it all to get even!" Margaret exclaimed, wiping her eyes. "He came in at just the right time. That *goose* was beginning to talk his silly, soft talk—the way he does with every girl in town—and he was almost proposing, and I didn't know how to stop him. And then Penrod came in and did it for me. I could have hugged Penrod, mamma, I actually could! And I saw he meant to stay to get even for that ammonia—and, oh, I worked so hard to make

him think I wanted him to *go*! Mamma, mamma, if you could have *seen* that walk! That *goose* kept thinking he could wear Penrod out or drop him behind, but I knew he couldn't so long as Penrod believed he was worrying us and getting even. And that *goose* thought I *wanted* to get rid of Penrod, too; and the conceited thing said it would turn out 'gloriously,' meaning we'd be alone together pretty soon—I'd like to shake him! You see, I pretended so well, in order to make Penrod stick to us, that *goose* believed I meant it! And if he hadn't tried to walk Penrod off his legs, he wouldn't have wilted his own collar and worn himself out, and I think he'd have hung on until you'd have had to invite him to stay to supper, and he'd have stayed on all evening, and I wouldn't have had a chance to write to Robert Williams. Mamma, there have been lots of times when I haven't been thankful for Penrod, but today I could have got down on my knees to you and papa for giving me such a brother!"

In the darkness of the hall, as a small but crushed and broken form stole away from the crack in the door, a gigantic Eye seemed to form—seemed to glare down upon Penrod—warning him that the way of vengeance is the way of bafflement, and that genius may not prevail against the trickeries of women.

"This has been a *nice* day!" Penrod muttered hoarsely.

QUESTIONS

1. Describe Penrod's state of mind during the church services.
2. What impression do you get of the nature of the friendship between Penrod and Georgie Bassett?
3. What was the significance to Penrod of the Eye? To Georgie?
4. Has Margaret a sense of humor? Has Mr. Blakely? Has Penrod?

5. How does the sneezing episode add to the interest of the story?
6. What was the trouble with Penrod's plans for revenge on Margaret?
7. Describe the scene in the parlor as Penrod discovered it.
8. What was Mr. Blakely's motive in suggesting a walk? With what success did his plan meet?
9. What are your impressions of Mr. Blakely? Why?
10. What was Penrod's state of mind as he uttered his concluding statement?
11. Has the day been a success from Margaret's point of view?
12. Is the relationship between Penrod and Margaret a natural one?
13. What to your mind is the most humorous incident in the whole story?
14. Do you consider this story of interest to all classes of readers? Why?
15. Compare briefly the character of Penrod with Gareth in "The True Romance."
16. Which of these characters, Penrod or Gareth, appeals to you more? Why?
17. Who appears to have more knowledge of boys, Mr. Tarkington or Mr. Terhune?
18. Has Mr. Tarkington a sense of humor? Cite examples to prove your statement.
19. Describe the situation as you imagine it when Penrod helped Margaret to entertain Robert Williams on the eve of his departure for college.
20. Pick out the three details that seem to you most telling in describing a boy of Penrod's age. Notice that Tarkington never mentions the obvious—that Penrod's hands were dirty or his hair untidy—but chooses details that reveal a keen observation and sympathetic understanding.
21. Do you believe that "the way of vengeance is the way of bafflement"?

ALL OR NOTHING

BY

CHARLES CALDWELL DOBIE

CHARLES CALDWELL DOBIE

(1881—)

Charles Caldwell Dobie lives in San Francisco, where he was born on March 15th, 1881. Here he entered upon a business career in Fire and Marine Insurance. While working at insurance he essayed story writing, and as he himself says, "learned to write by writing."

After many literary discouragements, a story by Charles Caldwell Dobie finally appeared in the San Francisco *Argonaut*, in 1910. For the six years following, while still engaged in business, he continued his literary activities, until in 1916, after having felt his way along in the literary world, he finally forsook business and gave his time wholly to writing.

His efforts in this latter field have been well rewarded. Many excellent stories have come from his pen. *Harper's Magazine*, in 1925, awarded his story, "Wild Geese," first prize. Other of his stories have been included in the Edward J. O'Brien and the O. Henry Memorial collections.

"The Arrested Moment," a volume of short stories by Mr. Dobie, appeared in 1927.

ALL OR NOTHING

At Pedro the other two passengers in the Half-moon Bay bus crawled out and, as the driver shot the car forward, their voices floated back with sharp insistence, "Anson Carr?" "Yes—you know, the man who came into all that money."

Anson Carr heard the query and answer distinctly, and almost for the first time he realized that he had become a person of importance. The thought both pleased and irritated him. He had always had a craving to stand out from the crowd, to be a person of distinction. He had looked forward to the day when the public would whisper as he passed: "There goes Anson Carr, the famous architect!"

Well, half his dream had come true. At least he was recognized in public places. But he couldn't feel much satisfaction in the circumstances which had pushed him forward. He had the true artist's distaste for money without creative justification, and there was something ironical and humiliating in the fact that what local fame he had achieved had been swamped utterly in the questionable glamour of his new estate. He set his lips together. Well, he would show the public that wealth could be converted into a stepping-stone to something worthy. He would make them forget that he had fallen heir to a large and demoralizing inheritance. And, with a start, he came out of his reverie to a realization that he was nearing the spot which had bound up tragedy and good fortune in one swift stroke. Quite as suddenly the man at the wheel leaned back and said:

"The accident happened there—straight ahead where you see the break in the fence. It wasn't the first death on that turn, and it won't be the last."

Anson Carr bent sidewise and looked down at the brush-covered hillside rolling to an abrupt and cruel depth. Instinctively he put his hand upon the shoulder of the driver.

"Let's stop a moment," he suggested.

The man obeyed, reaching for a cigarette. "Did you know them?" he inquired.

"The man was my uncle," Carr finally admitted. And, almost at once, he wondered whether he had made the proper reply.

The driver gave him a look of amazed interest. "Oh, you're the fellow who came into all the money!" he drawled, incredulously. "Live in San Francisco?"

Anson Carr nodded. He knew what the man was

thinking—if an interested relation waited months before visiting the scene of tragedy, why come at all? Without further calculation he broke out, apologetically, "I've been away, you see"—in his haste to justify himself, quite ignoring the fact that he had lied shamelessly and to very little purpose.

The driver looked reassured. "They must have been dead a good part of an hour before they were found," he volunteered, with the keen delight of a man called upon for harrowing details. "I never could figure how the guy who saw them lying there ever got the bodies out."

Carr again debated swiftly the expediency of prolonging the topic. "A Greek found them, I believe."

"Yes—one of the trackwalkers for the railroad. He'd come up this way after some fool weed them Greeks use for salad. He don't look so awful husky, but it takes a good man to carry two dead ones up a grade like that and not drag them any, either."

Carr's voice assumed a casual interest. "A track-walker for the railroad! Then he must live somewhere about here."

The driver started the machine. "I'll show you his place when we get to the top of the hill."

The bus crawled languidly up the grade, gathering speed as its effort became prolonged. Carr leaned back in his seat and gave himself up to fragmentary speculations. Hedged on one side by the tawny bank into which the road ate its sinuous way, and on the other by a monotonous slope of dun-colored chaparral, the landscape lacked interest. Carr was glad of one thing—at least it was a clear day; at this point the usual midsummer fog would have been depressing.

He was still toying fastidiously with his thoughts

when the machine came to an abrupt stop. They had reached the summit of the hill and before them a sapphire-blue surge of ocean stretched unbroken to the sky line. A little gasp of astonishment and delight escaped him. It was unusual for the ocean-shore country of Central California to be colored with such tropic splendor.

He was recalled from his momentary ecstasy by the pressure of the driver's fingers against his shoulder. "There," the man was saying, pointing in a direct line below, "in that corrugated-iron shack near the siding—that's where the Greek who found them lives."

Carr looked down. A single and rather forlorn-looking railroad track skirted perilously near the edge of a treacherous cliff; in a jagged curve in the hill-side, the sun fell glistening upon a blue-silver hut lying at the end of a trail beaten through the fragmentary shale of the mountain-side. A thin curl of smoke rose languidly in the amber air. Evidently the Greek was at home.

"I don't think I'll go any farther," declared Carr, somewhat lamely, as he made a movement suggestive of escape. "When does the next bus go back?"

The driver stared incredulously. "About three-thirty from this point. . . . But you never can tell, there may be a full house."

Anson Carr stepped stiffly out upon the oil-blue highway. "I'll risk it!" he said brusquely, with an air of dismissal.

But the man at the wheel was not put out of countenance by any such abrupt leave-taking. Instead of shooting the car forward, he leaned out with irritating assumption as he said:

"If you want any dope, that Greek is the last per-

son in the world to go to. . . . He only understands English when it suits him. . . . And it usually doesn't."

A dull resentment flickered in the suppressed warmth of Carr's retort.

"I'm used to handling Greeks," he flung back, briefly.

The driver shrugged his shoulders and started the bus on its way again.

Anson Carr stood irresolutely before the trail's well-defined source. He did not trust his feet to its treacherous length at once; instead, he squatted Oriental-wise and gazed into the far-flung horizon, across which two full-rigged sailing vessels were crawling with placid patience.

The bus driver had not told Anson Carr anything new. Everybody had said the same thing:

"The Greek won't talk—you can't get anything out of him."

Every time he heard the stock phrase repeated he had smiled inwardly, framing contemptuous conclusions regarding the trackwalker's stubborn silence. Of course they couldn't get anything out of him! One had to know the breed to set successfully a trap for snaring confidences. If one understood sufficiently, one might read a satisfactory answer to the question put in the very manner it was evaded. A lift of the eyebrows might tell him infinitely more than the clipped directness of a terse aye or nay. And twenty years as an architect handling a fair complement of unskilled labor, in season and out, had given Anson Carr certain avenues of approach to aliens which were obviously closed to others.

As he balanced himself close to the edge of that tawny cliff overlooking the sea, he tried for the hun-

dreadth time to analyze the impulse which had drawn him at the eleventh hour toward a more or less futile investigation. He supposed that a less introspective nature would have accepted the Greek's silence and thanked God that it had helped him to a speedy possession of a totally undeserved fortune. His uncle had been nothing to him—indeed, he had felt a violent dislike for him—and his aunt, by the same token, had been equally remote. When Alexander Holman had recouped his squandered fortune by marrying a rich widow from New York, Anson Carr had remarked ironically to his wife:

“Well, at last he's struck a soft berth!”

But on the day news had come that Holman had gone over a bank near Montara, killing himself and his wife instantly, he had not even bothered to report the matter to Nancy. The next morning, as the family was at breakfast the children had pounced upon the story eagerly. He remembered now their morbid curiosity in the details and how it had ruffled him. And how equally irritating had been his wife's:

“I wonder who'll get all the money?”

He had never thought of himself in this connection. His uncle had nothing, and Mrs. Holman's fortune would, of course, go to her people. He had been inclined to scoff when his lawyer had rung him up to make an appointment. But at the end of that interview his attitude of indifference had suffered a distinct change. Not that the lawyer's argument had won him. There were still too many difficulties which a man of sensibilities would shrink from encompassing. But the main facts of the case held potentialities. Alexander Holman and his wife, unless testimony was forthcoming to the contrary, had both met death almost instantly. Failing actual knowl-

edge, the law always assumed that the woman under such circumstances was the first to die. Mrs. Holman had left a will settling every penny on her husband. Anson Carr was his legal heir. The inference was obvious.

Developments had been swift. So far it appeared that he had every legal right to his astounding inheritance. Even Mrs. Holman's sister had admitted that much in a letter that had been dignified to a point of well-bred contempt. . . . Obviously, the lady was not in want, else she would not have been so scornfully indifferent.

When he had wavered a bit his lawyer reassured him with the irrefutable statement that he had just as much right to gather the fruits of chance as the next fellow. But Anson Carr was still a bit in doubt; he wanted to make sure that the dice had been thrown fairly. If he had the rights of chance upon his side, then so did Mrs. Holman's sister. The Greek track-walker was the only person who could settle the point. And, according to report, the Greek was curiously noncommittal.

Upon the brink of ending all uncertainty, Carr felt the curious reluctance which often confronts a man at the crucial moment.

He rose slowly from his squatting posture, hesitating a moment before he began to descend the jagged path. His weight released bits of shattered rock and set them tumbling downward toward the solitary railroad track. He wondered what whim had raised a dwelling place in this desolate spot. The slopes were without the charity of even a bleached turf, much less a sweep of greensward, and only here and there a golden splash of wild poppies struggled through the stony surface to a belated blossoming.

But when he had accomplished the trail's length, a clear and ice-cold drip of water betrayed the reason for choosing such an otherwise forbidding location—a land bitten by summer drought could be scornful of every circumstance save lack of water.

A hard, frugal cleanliness was over everything. The space in front of the open door was swept bare of rock fragments, revealing a tawny and sun-baked sod. At one side, close to the silver dribble of the hill, a little garden had been achieved by the peasant's ardor for contact with the soil. Shallow rows of crisp lettuce, a few darkly green plants of the horse bean, parsley, a savory herb or two—these fruits of primitive tillage made the desolation smile with human homeliness.

Anson Carr stepped into the shadow of the doorway. A fragrant odor of stewing mutton, touched with garlic, gave him a pleasant pang of hunger. He knocked, and, without waiting for an invitation, entered. Fresh as he was from the sun's midday glare, the room's gracious gloom revealed only the dimmest of outlines. He sensed rather than saw the figure of a man spring into dusky life, and quickly he defended his unceremonious entrance with a perfectly worded apology, eschewing the clipped English that would have risen to the lips of the provincial and tactless. He was tired and hungry and in a strange bit of country, he explained, and, seeing a house surrounded by a pleasant garden, he had made free to enter. The Greek, snared at once by the challenge to his hospitality, came forward, his thickly clustered hair dipping ceremoniously in a series of sweeping bows. He was cooking a meal—a very poor meal, to be sure—but if the gentleman would honor him. . . .

Anson Carr returned a smiling acceptance. "Mutton and rice?" he half queried. "Only the Greeks know how to cook that dish."

The Greek beamed, flashing white teeth. Had the gentleman been in Greece, by any chance?

Unfortunately, no . . . but at the Minerva Café in San Francisco. . . .

It was not necessary to say anything more. Immediately Anson Carr's swarthy host renewed his sweeping gestures of welcome. His mutton and rice could not be compared to the fare at the Minerva, but such as it was he offered it upon the shrine of hospitality.

The Greek drew a bench out from the table, as he ushered Carr to a seat. When he crossed over to lift the lid from the steaming pot upon the stove, the delicious odors that escaped filled Anson Carr with anticipatory delight. He leaned forward with both elbows on the rude, uncovered table. He was hungry and pleasantly tired, and, so far, quite satisfied with his progress. At least he had established one fact—the Greek's ability to understand and speak English.

Presently a huge plate of mutton stew and rice swimming in a rich gravy and covered with boiled lettuce leaves stood in the center of the table. The Greek poured out two tin cups of water, making a fine gesture of disdain as he laid one at each place.

It was the very devil itself to get wine these days at any price, he explained, rather heatedly. For a moment, Anson Carr narrowed his eyes. Why hadn't he thought to bring a quart of claret with him? A moistened tongue always ran along more smoothly. Well, it was too late now, and in default of such assistance he fell back upon the expediency of voicing a racial interest in the man opposite him. The Greek,

with that ardor which any and all of his countrymen always brought to a recital of national glories, glowed warmly under the spell of Carr's rapt and provocative silence. Indeed, his lyrical outburst became so swift and vehement that his guest was unable to follow him. But presently, Anson Carr, discovering that the monologue had traveled back to the physical glories of ancient Greece, leaned forward as he said, quite casually:

"The Greeks have always been strong people. . . . The bus driver tells me that you, yourself, carried two dead bodies up a steep hill through the brush without dragging them. Is that the truth?"

For a moment the very atmosphere of the room was darkened by the Greek's swarthy scowl. "Yes," he threw back, "but that is nothing."

Carr broke a thick crust from the round loaf at his elbow. His heart was pounding and his lips had dried with curious suddenness.

"It showed strength, just the same. For my part, I believe I'd have had to drag them. . . . They were dead, weren't they—both of them?"

The Greek's displeasure merged swiftly into an impassive mask of unconcern. "How should I know?" he shrugged. "I'm not a doctor."

Anson Carr let out a quick gasp of almost painful relief.

He did not wait for the bus; instead, he decided to walk the track into Pedro and take the train. The Greek's evasive answer to his direct question had been far from reassuring, and yet he had been glad to escape with the question still unsettled. He was frightened now at the realization of how near he had come to pulling down his house of cards upon his

head. He wished he could go home and talk the matter over calmly with his wife. But he knew how futile any discussion would be with Nancy. She had been determined and decisive from the first, putting her argument forward with all the personal bias of motherhood:

"What is Mrs. Holman's sister to you? Why not think of your own for a change?"

Her retort had stung him. It was flavored with a subtle reproach at his inadequacy, which he recognized only too well. He had started his career with high hopes—a yearning to do big things. He had it in him—he felt this, with that curious conviction which pervades artists of any calling. Yet he had allowed expediency to swamp his ambitions. Not that his work had been unworthy, but it had been limited in its scope. He had never had the leisure for magnificent flights. With a brood of fledglings shrilling for their daily keep, it took something more than genius to deny substantial but uninspired commissions. Anson Carr did not regret his family, but only he knew the price he had paid for it. Alone he could have starved and dreamed, and in the end created something lasting. As it was, he had had to be content with mere dreaming. Yet he had managed to achieve one or two distinctly good structures in these later years, modest buildings that had inspired praise which whetted his appetite for greater triumphs. He knew that Nancy had felt something of his struggles, for, finding him still somewhat cold before her maternal arguments, she had finished by saying:

"After all, you can do now what you've always longed to do"—at this point discreetly letting the subject drop.

What he had always longed to do! The realiza-

tion made him spiritually dizzy. He knew well enough why his creative flights were doomed to endless and futile circlings. He had never, for one thing, had the opportunity to go to the sources of inspiration and drink deeply of their stimulating flow. In the old days, what would he not have given to spend a year, a month, a day, even in the shadow of St. Peter's,* or within the walls of the Alhambra,† or before the robust and yet misty altar of some Gothic cathedral! How he had longed to go over and steep his soul in the quiet flood of the past, waiting patiently for the rebirth, through him, of some pregnant seed of its beauty! . . . At the beginning he had not been without hopes for such a consummation, but as the years went on taking their toll he had decided that he was fated to taste these joys only vicariously. He was still a young man, and, while his family ties had tethered him, they had not bound his spirit utterly. He could still see visions, although their outlines had been growing dimmer. And, now, fate had put the means in his hand for making all these flagging hopes come true. It would not be a matter of months to be spent among the monumental achievements of the Old World; he could stay for years—forever, if need be. And suddenly he was swept with a feeling of intense weariness, as if his spirit had used up all its reserve energy in the struggle for mere existence. He felt that even if he were to go on turning out unimportant architectural records of his soul's starvation, he would need some respite, some stimulus. Yet, in the face of his ex-

**St. Peter's*, the famous cathedral at Rome, whose dome is one of the most magnificent achievements of architecture.

†*Alhambra*, the beautiful Moorish palace at Granada, Spain, also an architectural wonder.

haustion, he had been foolish enough to tempt fate with almost morbid daring.

He felt that he never again wanted to find himself as shaken as he had been at that moment when he had hung fearfully on the trackwalker's possible revelations. For, somehow, such a crisis tried a man's soul too ruthlessly, and he was beginning to realize how humiliating it was to come too close to one's spiritual nakedness. He ceased to have any wish to be fair. Instead, he felt a sudden and primitive impulse to fight to the last ditch against any and every thing that threatened to destroy his belated moment of realization.

The train was delayed by a boulder tumbling across the track from one of the shifting cliffs, and Anson Carr was late for dinner. He decided not to offer an explanation.

"You're sunburnt," his wife observed, with a tone of mild curiosity.

"Yes—I've been out in the open," was his non-committal reply.

The children were full of tentative and, on the whole, rather expensive plans for the winter. Gladys had decided upon horseback riding three times a week through the park with an exclusive riding club; Bob had been looking over a score of high-power cars; even Ruth, despite her scant twelve years, was voicing ambitions that had the distinct tang of affluence. Nancy sat back and listened, amused and indulgent, secretly pleased that her feathering brood could take the wing with such sweeping confidence. But Anson Carr was annoyed, and, after the children had deserted the table, leaving their parents as usual to dawdle over their black coffee, he said to Nancy, a bit sharply:

"In heaven's name, where do the children get all these expensive notions? I hope you're not encouraging them in such foolishness."

She set her lip with the defensive hardness that he was beginning to know so well.

"Encouraging them!" she echoed. "Surely they have a right to expect a little something in advance—now that their future is assured."

"I think their future was pretty well assured in any case. We've never been exactly paupers. . . . Besides, nothing is certain. And you'd better tell them so before they have a chance to make fools of themselves."

"I thought everything was settled."

"Settled? With the chief witness silent? . . . Nothing is ever settled when a person refuses to go on record. . . . The case might be reopened at any time. . . . As a matter of fact, I've been all afternoon trying to get this Greek trackwalker to talk."

She thrust aside her cup with an impatient gesture. "I should think you'd let well enough alone. First thing you know that man will scent trouble. If you keep picking at him he's likely to say anything."

Her heat gave him the cue for a deliberate coolness. "I think he scents trouble now. In fact, he must have suspected something from the first. These Greeks, you know, are chary of legal entanglements. They have an almost Oriental fear. And fear always leads to evasion."

She followed his explanation with a more tolerant attitude. "Isn't it more than likely," she began, cautiously, "that he's waiting to be convinced?"

"Possible."

She did not speak at once. There was something awkward and ominous in this pause. She was cutting

a design upon the tablecloth with a sharp finger nail when she finally said, almost inaudibly:

"Well, if you were to make it worth his while, perhaps——"

Anson Carr made no reply.

He had a vague feeling that he should have manifested displeasure, but instead he found himself repeating, silently: "So at last it has come to this!"

And he was conscious that his mental exclamation held more of fulfilled expectancy than surprise.

He did not broach the subject to Nancy again. It was as if, having lifted the veil of her reserve, he had a fear of chancing further glimpses. Like every man with ideals, he had clothed the object of his affections in a shimmer of virtue and at this stage he was unwilling to disclose imperfections which his fancy had kept covered. Concerning himself, he was maintaining less and less illusion; that was why it was needful to conserve passionately his illusion in others. For the most part, he kept introspection at arm's length. He was trying to establish the ability to accept the favor of the gods on its face value without undue questioning. The children still talked extravagantly, airing their opulent desires. Sometimes he wondered if their prodigal expectations were not tinged with subtle encouragement from their mother. Doubtless she felt that the more firmly they laid hands upon the future the more difficult would be any attempts to destroy it.

Meanwhile, all the legal entanglements in connection with his inheritance unsnarled with surprising swiftness. The complete, but by no means disturbing, aloofness of Mrs. Holman's sister continued. He began to plan, definitely, now, for his future. He no longer kept his expectations to himself. Instead, he

went about with steamship folders and second-hand books of travel. He asked everybody he met about hotels, *pensions*, interesting towns off the beaten track. He found himself expanding like some belated blossom denied its appointed season by a prolonged bleakness. And, as he passed people, in hotel lobbies or cafés, or theater foyers, he heard them whisper his name, saw them stare, glimpsed the mingled admiration and envy in their glances. He was Anson Carr, the man who had come into "all that money." And the public were reacting, like children, to the glamour of some fairy tale. There were those of his confrères who shook their heads. "He fancies he's going to do big things," they would say. "But of course he won't; it's too late. And, besides, so much money is demoralizing." Others, more friendly, conceded that his opportunity for growth was unlimited. "A man without financial pressure can achieve his desires, not other people's." In short, it was not long before the subject of Anson Carr began to be debated furiously. He became an abstract question. In him a theory remained to be tested. Even the newspapers took him up; architects, actors, painters, writers, clubwomen, were asked to give their opinions as to whether the inheritance of a huge fortune was helpful or inimical to the best traditions of art. He ended by being more apprehensive than annoyed. What, in heaven's name, had possessed him to allow himself to become public property? But, on second thought, he realized that he had accomplished the thing deliberately. Like his children, he was laying firm hands upon the future by flooding the stage so full of light that it would be impossible for him to back off unseen.

Whenever he thought of that terrifying trip to the corrugated-iron shack near the railroad siding he

grew cold all over. Thank God, that had ended neutrally! Finally he dismissed the whole thing from his mind. Indeed, he had fancied the issue quite settled when one day, chancing to visit the Greek quarter in search of some unskilled labor for a friendly contractor, whom should he bump into but his Greek trackwalker.

The man halted with a smile of recognition and the usual sweeping bow. He had grown tired of the little hut overlooking the sea, and so he had quit for a week or two. Without quite realizing it, Anson Carr found himself inviting his swarthy friend to join him in a cup of Turkish coffee.

They went into the first coffee-house at hand, and sat down at one of the marble-topped tables. The room was almost deserted. Carr never remembered seeing one of these Greek coffee-houses so empty, even at this slack hour. The proprietor himself came forward to wait upon them, a melancholy smile upon his face. As he gave the order, Carr remarked the lack of patronage. The proprietor became more and more wistful as he recited his woes. Prohibition had killed everything—even the coffee-houses. When he left to prepare the coffee, the trackwalker took up the lament. He missed his wine, and as for mastic —he finished with a gesture of ultimate despair, running his hands through his thick hair tragically. If he had enough money he would leave at once for his native land. Ah yes, Greece was the country of delight. There one could have the fruit of the vine, and people danced upon feast days, and the sunlight was like spun gold.

Anson Carr listened indifferently to his companion's chatter. It was the old lyrical outburst that he knew so well. But when the proprietor broke in

upon them with two thick and steaming coffees, he had paused, evidently in polite expectation of a retort.

"So if you had money enough you'd go back home!" The Greek nodded and began to sip his coffee. Anson Carr had a sudden inspiration. "I suppose," he broke out again, "that it wouldn't be possible to get something stronger than coffee here?" The trackwalker stared. "A taste of mastica, for instance?"

The man opposite him shrugged with delightful candor.

"One can get nothing without asking," he returned, tranquilly.

Anson Carr beckoned the waiter, who had retreated to his position near the coffee shelf. He answered the signal at once. Carr put the question squarely. There followed an animated reply significant with phrases enlarging upon the difficulties of complying with such an outrageous request. Anson Carr listened patiently. At the end he said emphatically:

"Bring us two—and say no more about it."

The man smiled widely and bustled away. The trackwalker let out a low sigh of anticipation.

The mastica had been diluted, there was no doubt of that, but it still had the power to quicken both the pulse and the imagination. Under its influence the Greek grew more and more talkative and Anson Carr more and more retrospective. The taste of this colorless aric-flavored stimulant revived in Carr the memory of days when the quarter had been warmed to racial geniality by this national drink. Then the coffee-houses had been crowded, and men had danced together their old ceremonial dances and sipped their

coffee with much jesting and a good deal of laughter.

In those days he had come down frequently just for relaxation. And somehow he had always gone away refreshed by the naïveté of it all. He found himself vaguely speculating whether he would go away refreshed in this instance, and, noticing that his guest had finished his *mastica* in one final gulp of satisfaction, he ordered another. The trackwalker began to talk with even greater insistence: This was the life . . . something to drink . . . friends to talk to . . . nothing to do! How lonesome he had been on that railroad siding with the sea forever making ominous noises! He was not accustomed to the sea; he was from the mountain. . . . A sheep herder? Yes, in his youth. . . . No, shepherding was not a lonely life. . . . One had dogs and lambs and the birds of the forest for company. . . . There were birds along the California shore, of course, screaming, melancholy things of no account. . . . The sea lapping the sands of Greece? Ah, that was different! Not cold and gray and forbidding at any time. No, if one could believe it, the sea in that favored spot was always a thing of sky-blue and gold.

Anson Carr found himself intrigued and carried away by the exile's lament. He had a wish that the man would continue to talk of nothing but his native land . . . he wanted to escape with him into a rosy-flushed horizon of dreams. But presently the Greek's background shifted, for contrast, undoubtedly. He came back with a pull to the corrugated-iron hut along the edge of the Pacific. It had been lonely, he reiterated. For days he would talk to no one. . . . Of course, immediately after the accident—

"The accident?" Anson Carr found himself echoing with a strange terror.

Yes, the accident . . . two people killed. Didn't the gentleman remember? Well, after that, for a season crowds of people had swarmed in on him, asking all sorts of questions. But he had been wise. He had refused to answer anybody. . . . That was right, wasn't it . . . after an accident to do no talking? . . . The law was a crafty matter. . . . If one kept one's mouth shut things soon mended, but if one talked . . . well, in that case anything was possible. . . . He had a countryman once who went into a lonely hut in the mountains and found a man dying . . . and, would you believe it? they tried to prove that this countryman had committed a murder. Yes, and all because the man had talked, in his excitement, stating things that were afterwards proved to be untrue. . . . Not that the man had lied, but at such times one does not always see correctly—one imagines things. . . . Ah, but he had profited by this countryman's experience! and when people had come, asking him slyly certain questions, he had either shrugged his shoulders or returned a meaningless answer.

"Questions. What sort of questions?" Anson Carr put in, deftly.

"They always asked the same thing, my friend—which had died first, the man or the woman."

For a moment Anson Carr was distracted by the audible buzzing of a fly hovering just above his coffee cup. He waved the intruder away as he leaned forward with confidential air of comradeship and said, point-blank:

"And who did die first? I'm curious, too."

The Greek trackwalker smiled cryptically. "I could answer that if I wanted to. . . . Well, maybe I will. We are good friends, eh? What do you say?"

Anson Carr felt his heart sink suddenly. He had an impulse to rise and leave at once, but instead he found himself replying:

"Wait. . . . After we've had another drink!" And with that the proprietor came forward, carrying two deceitful black coffee cups on a tray.

He speculated, afterwards, as he set his course toward home, what perversity tempted men to stir up the pools of content? Why could not one accept the crystal clearness of still water instead of taking issue with its slimy bed? Was there really something fundamental in both physical and spiritual existence at odds with serenity? Something which drove a man on and on, from one disillusionment to another, toward the ultimate resignation? Was life a perpetual Bluebeard's chamber, luring the curious to destruction with the snare of a closed door? He wondered what Nancy would say—would think. Should he take her into his confidence? Nowadays he had a sort of terror in her presence, realizing that he was no match for her—that no male was a match for any female defending the claims of her progeny. He knew that his part in the problem had ceased to move her. She merely traded on his desires, to achieve a desirable end for her children. When he enlarged upon the glories of his future she smiled tolerantly. He had a feeling that, in the end, she would be content to let him ramble off and dream alone.

He found her helping the Japanese servant clear away evidences of an informal tea-table. She had stripped the garden of its riot of dahlias and the room quite glowed with their flamboyant color. It was a pleasant room, Anson Carr found himself admitting, even if it was of his own designing. He

dropped into a seat beside the silver tea urn. He was glad to be back in the delightfully screened interior. It was full of little intimate revelations, which seemed to sum up, in their quiet and orderly beauty, the complete history of his married life.

"Ah, this is good, after all! . . . It would be hard to improve on this room, Nancy. We've done well with it, and no mistake."

She was still glowing warmly with the animated intimacies of the tea hour, and her manner was almost brilliant as she threw back:

"Oh, this is nothing. Wait till you see what we can do with a real background!"

For the first time it came to him that already Nancy was planning to abandon her present environment for something more impressive. The realization wounded him. This home had been the one free and perfect expression of his creative power. It lacked magnificence, but it was filled with an unhampered sincerity.

"What better could anyone want than this?" he demanded.

She met his challenge with an indulgent laugh.

"I'll show you, some day," she retorted. "You've no idea how much money can buy."

"Money!" he sneered.

She misread his contempt. "You must be tired," she suggested. "Better let me make you a cup of tea."

He made a gesture of refusal. "I've been drinking coffee all afternoon."

"Coffee? How absurd! No wonder you're all on edge."

"Well, there was something stronger, too. I was looking up some men for trackwalkers. We went

into a café for Turkish coffee . . . we ended by drinking masticas. He talked me into a headache."

She sat down opposite him, brushing aside a golden shower of pollen which had scattered from one of the bouquets upon the shining surface of the center table.

"Did you learn anything . . . new?"

He turned upon her with a curious impulse to wound. "Nothing but what I've expected. . . . She was alive when he found them . . ."

There followed an interval of portentous silence, broken by the sound of Carr's cigarette holder tapping against the arm of his chair.

"Ah," floated toward him finally, upon a breath painfully released, "then we are in his hands, after all. . . . Can't you persuade him to go away?"

He lit a match wearily. "He's going back . . . to Greece. We settled that question before I left him."

"Does he suspect?"

"One never can be sure—with a peasant. . . . But a man with wits usually knows from which quarter the wind blows." She rose with a nervous movement, releasing her disquiet in a trivial rearrangement of the dahlias. It was not until her back was turned that he gathered courage for the next thrust.

"I'll see my lawyer in the morning."

She faced him swiftly. "Surely you're not going to be fool enough to tell him!"

"Not that, at any rate. But it's only decent to offer Mrs. Holman's sister something . . . now."

"Why?"

"Why! In God's name, what would you have me do?"

She met the thrust with a quick mental side-step. "The man may be lying."

"That isn't likely."

"And, besides, a compromise might arouse her suspicions. Next thing she'll come flying out here. If she offers that Greek more, he'll stay."

He left his seat deliberately. "No, she wouldn't stoop to that. Her letters prove she isn't that kind of woman."

She gave a defiant toss of her head.

"Well, if I were you, I know what I'd do—I'd make up my mind to take it all or nothing."

He folded his arms with an air of insolent tolerance. "And, being yourself, what then?"

She looked at him squarely. "Being myself, I wouldn't yield up one penny. . . . Mrs. Holman's sister is nothing to me."

He swept her from head to foot with an appraising glance. Curiously enough, her words did not shock him. Instead, he was forced into grudging admiration. She had the courage of her maternal ruthlessness, at all events.

He was sure that Nancy's all-or-nothing theory had been a matter of sheer bravado, one of those magnificent gestures which a cornered antagonist makes in the hope of confusing an adversary. Nevertheless, the logic was irrefutable. Even insincerity could not disguise the inherent soundness of such a position. Yet, in spite of his conviction he saw his lawyer and the offer was made. He felt an enormous relief. Somehow, he had a vague feeling that an acceptance of his terms would divide the responsibility—that, by yielding to a compromise, Mrs. Holman's sister would become party to his duplicity. But beneath the surface of his content lurked a latent apprehension. He decided to leave as few loopholes for wavering as possible. He announced that he would not wait until spring

to accomplish his long-deferred pilgrimage to the shrines of his art. He was going at once. As he suspected, Nancy begged for a postponement, so far as she was concerned. There were the children, and—he merely shrugged his shoulders and went and arranged transportation for himself.

He was kept very busy, for he soon discovered that he had the departure of the Greek trackwalker to accomplish. When he first had made the offer it had seemed the simplest thing imaginable—a certain sum forthcoming and that would be the end of it. But at once complications arose, matters of a passport and all the awkward questions which conditions abroad at this time raised. Hardly a day passed when the Greek was not hovering about his office with obsequious patience: he wanted to give no offense and be of the least trouble in the world, but if Mr. Carr would spare a few moments to go with him to the Greek consul, they could at once settle such and such an issue. Or he required some sort of letter of credit and would his patron mind introducing him to his banker? Or there was need of witnesses to the fact that he was born thus and so. What was to be done about it? All this might have been tolerable had the trackwalker been content to allow Anson Carr to pose merely as an adviser, but he seemed to take an almost diabolical joy in proclaiming relationship. This American was his patron, an astounding man, truly, who was making him a present of a ticket home just out of pure love and affection. And in the presence of any and all of his countrymen he would embrace Anson Carr fervently and with embarrassing ardor. Carr remonstrated. It was not necessary to proclaim the news from the house-tops—he did not care to have his generosity become public property.

But he merely wasted breath. By way of answer, his protégé made a series of sweeping bows and declared that it was not the custom of his country to hide the light of a friend's worthiness under a bushel. Of what profit was virtue if its praise remained unsung?

All this was tiresome enough when performed before an audience composed of strangers, and Anson Carr fell to wondering if some day the circle of auditors would not widen to include an acquaintance or even an intimate. And almost before the speculation had escaped him the fear was realized. The Greek, breaking hastily into the office one day, had found Carr coming out the door in company with his lawyer. It was useless to stem the tide of speech which overwhelmed them in a lyrical flood. Everything was finally settled and on Monday he was to start home—the ticket bought and all the other tiresome tangles unknotted. And on Saturday afternoon a great feast at the corrugated-iron shack near the ocean, an *al fresco* affair, with a whole sheep roasted, and Greek music and shepherd dancing. He had come to make certain that his worthy patron would be there—he was consumed with a desire to present such a paragon of generosity to his countrymen. And here he turned to Anson Carr's lawyer: Fancy a man out of sheer compassion providing the means for homeward flight to a stranger sorrowing for his native land!

Carr dismissed the man with a rather curt acceptance of the invitation. To have refused would have led to a string of irritating protests. Was the Greek simple, or extraordinarily profound?

He came from the haze of this idle speculation into the casual significance of his lawyer's query:

"That's the man who pulled Mr. and Mrs. Holman out of the wreck, isn't it?"

He fumbled a bit mentally, deciding in the end to chance a discreet frankness. "Yes. . . . I think, everything considered, that the best place for him is home!" And, finding his lawyer disturbingly non-committal, he was forced to hide his uneasiness behind an empty and cynical laugh.

He had no heart for the trackwalker's celebration, but it seemed best to go through with the ordeal. As he expected, he was the center of attraction, barring the roasted sheep and the thin dribbles of smuggled wine enlivening the occasion. There was a Homeric quality to the feast, and the sun came out of a dun-colored mist to warm the sea into Hellenic splendor. Under ordinary circumstances Anson Carr would have been completely captivated—at the feasting, at the rhythmic wailings of the violin and piccolo, at the long line of men dancing with alternate solemnity and abandon. He was a man who welcomed escapes from the commonplace, but how was one to escape into even an external beauty with the fiction of a questionable worthiness dinned constantly into one's ears? At the beginning he had taken the trackwalker aside and said:

"Cut me out. Do you understand? . . . I mean, let us have no more of this praise. . . . Say nothing of my hand in all this."

To which his faithful friend had raised indescribably mournful eyes in protest. "But consider—this feast is not for me, my friend! It is in your honor. We must say something of our patron."

Further protest was useless. He had to smile through all the encomiums that were heaped upon

him. Even granting the Oriental extravagance of their words, he began to sense that these men did think him an open-handed benefactor who distributed his boons with a regal contempt for self-interest. To them he was a bit of poetry made life—a reincarnation of those enchanted days when the gods stalked abroad and let their favors fall where and upon whom they would. Even the trackwalker shared his countrymen's illusion. Anson Carr could see that now only too plainly. And, somehow, he felt humiliated by the emptiness of his triumph. He was like a pretender raised upon a throne, knowing himself the falseness of his claim.

He got away from it all as quickly as possible. In the hope that he might have a few moments of solitude, he had scorned flagging the train at the siding, insisting that he wished to walk into Pedro instead. Walk? He, their benefactor? No, it was not to be thought of! Instead, they carried him in triumph on their shoulders, with the piccolo player in advance. Thus had he entered the village with children and all the curious trooping out to join in the festivity. And in the midst of it all the trackwalker, standing upon the mail truck, saying in a loud voice:

"You cannot think what this man has done. . . . For pure love and affection he pays my way home to my native land. . . . Yes, for love and nothing else. What have you to say to that?"

And the train pulling in, he was put to the further embarrassment of embraces from all the company and kisses implanted on either cheek in brotherly and Christian salutation.

Once seated, he leaned out of the car window, answering their farewell shouts with as eloquent a gesture as he could muster. . . . A sense of humiliation

engulfed him again. If the Greek had only suspected, how much easier it would have been! Was it possible that he was to tread the path of self-contempt alone? . . . Well, there was at least Mrs. Holman's sister. With cynical delight he turned his thoughts from the stale and unprofitable afternoon. To tug at his adversary's patronizing inflexibility with all the strength of compromise gave him a curious satisfaction. Pulling himself back to the heights was too great an effort. At this point it seemed easier to drag another down. He began to speculate about the exact date of his sailing. He was glad Nancy had decided to wait. He wanted to be alone with his dreams—*utterly alone!* He had never realized before how greatly he had longed for freedom.

He was late again for dinner, but this time Nancy met him in the hallway. She had an envelope in her hand.

"Where have you been?" she challenged, moving toward him nervously.

"The Greek had a farewell. It was absurd, of course, my going, but there are some things one can't escape. . . . He leaves to-morrow."

Her face glowed with a warm relief. "Ah, then that's settled! . . . They've been trying to get hold of you. Word has come, I believe, from Mrs. Holman's sister. I suggested they send the letter here. A boy brought it an hour or so ago."

"What did it say?"

"I haven't opened it."

He took the envelope from her. She retreated to the empty fireplace, resting one hand upon the mantel as she watched him. He read it through, measur-

ing every word. When he had finished he turned a chill smile in her direction as he said, sneeringly:

"As usual, she declines all compromise. . . . She won't even give us the satisfaction of a fight. . . . She has your idea—*all or nothing!*"

Her hand fell to her side. "Just the same, it's well that the Greek is going home," she retorted, with a shade of malice. "By the way, when do *you* sail?"

He stared at her for an eternity, and at that moment every beautiful thing that he had ever dreamed passed before his eyes and mocked him.

"I guess that's all over now," he heard himself say.

She came over to him swiftly, shaking him, as she might have shaken a child who had frightened her.

"What's the matter with you?" she almost shouted. "You can't mean that you intend to offer her *everything?*"

He tossed the envelope from him with a gesture of weariness. "Everything but my self-respect," he answered.

And, in a flash, he felt himself at once pitiful and triumphant—victorious, yet savorless—touched with a tragic but pallid splendor, alone in his white-bled glory.

QUESTIONS

1. What conflicting emotions beset the peace of mind of Anson Carr?
2. How would you characterize this man?
3. What was his great desire in life?
4. Explain the technicality on which the disposition of the inheritance rests.
5. What is Mrs. Carr's point of view regarding the inheritance?

6. Does Anson Carr's reaction to the situation seem a more natural one than his wife's?
7. What is the effect upon Anson Carr of his wife's statement that perhaps the Greek "is waiting to be persuaded" to talk?
8. Give a character sketch of the Greek.
9. What reason has he for his consistent refusal to talk on the subject of the accident?
10. What do you think of his manner of showing appreciation to Mr. Carr?
11. Describe the trackwalker's home and its surroundings.
12. Consider the statement so often made that "much money is demoralizing." How do you think this statement applies to each member of the Carr family?
13. What sort of woman do you imagine Mrs. Holman's sister to be?
14. Discuss in detail each of the possibilities presented for the disposal of this fortune. Should one person receive all of it, or a portion, or none?

MATCHES

BY

VIOLA PARADISE

VIOLA PARADISE

Viola Paradise belongs to the younger class of American writers. About ten years ago she began writing for magazines, but within the period of her participation in the field of literature she has gained prominence as a poet, a short story writer, author of special articles, dramatist and novelist.

Miss Paradise was born in Chicago and received her education in that city, graduating from the University of Chicago. Her first position was that of special government agent for the United States Children's Bureau. In this capacity she went all over the country investigating the lives of children in the larger cities of the East and the sparsely populated sections of the West. She spent three months in Montana and her report, "Maternity Care and Welfare of Young Children in a Homesteading County in Montana," was the result. Similar reports came from nearly all parts of the United States. But it was in Montana that the author gained her experiences which formed the nucleus for her story "Matches."

Following the two years she spent in work for the government, Viola Paradise came to New York and began her writing career, a taste for which she had cultivated while making reports for the United States Children's Bureau. In order to add to her source of material for magazine articles she gave much time to travel. Since all parts of the United States were familiar to her, she went abroad to visit out of the way places in Europe.

"Matches" was one of the first short stories to be written by Miss Paradise. However, following her return from abroad more stories appeared, many of which attracted wide attention. The editor of the *Pictorial Review* describes her story "Wild West" as "one of the most humanly appealing stories ever published in this magazine."

During the last two years Miss Paradise's major work has been the novel. Her first novel, "The Pacer," appeared in 1927, and the second, "Wit's End," December, 1928.

The short stories by Miss Paradise are, "Only a Conversation," "Calabrian," "Little Speed," "Boy Friend," "Thursday," "Crush," "Somebody Else." These stories are soon to appear in a volume of short stories by the author.

MATCHES

I

Weather is the villain of this story.

The early-morning March sun, careless and debonair, shone through scattered clouds upon the packing of nine persons into the seven-passenger auto stage, and upon the loading of the stage's trailer with cases and miscellaneous articles for far-off ranchers and squatters and homesteaders, and with the furniture and boxes and trunks belonging to Frances Stead and Louise Elmhurst, the two women passengers, who were setting out on the adventure of taking up land in the Great West.

The stage had just begun its journey along the Bison Skull Trail when Little Willie, the six-foot driver, bethought himself of a commission.

"Lee Dodd, he give me a letter for you girls. Most forgot it."

Without slackening the speed of the car, he extricated from a remote pocket a much-crumpled note, the reading of which was achieved with difficulty in the lurching machine.

"Ladies," ran the letter, "I wouldn't of let You Ladies buy my Relinkishment even for \$150\$, onley the Land agent Said you got some Capitle, enouf to go Home east Winters. This country aint no place for a Porr man or enybody specially Ladies after november But I fixed the Place clean for you and Dug some coal out a butte and Theres a pile of Sage brush ready that will keep fires for a while the Stove Draws good. I hauled a Barrel of water it is Froze now. You Haf to melt it. I here some Ladies done pretty good Once on a homestead and I hope You will.

"Your Snerely (this was crossed out) Truley

LEE DODD."

Dr. Calhoun, a tall, thin, clear-eyed young man, with a whimsical mouth, shared the back seat with the two young women. He studied their faces as they deciphered the missive. At once he liked them—especially Miss Stead. Miss Elmhurst, tall, dark, dreamy-eyed, was doubtless an “interesting girl,” but a slight preoccupation, even as she read the letter, suggested a dominant far-away interest, excluding him. Miss Stead, in contrast, was so imminently present. He liked what he called to himself the “good weather-beaten look of her face.” It expressed the vigor of her personality. Her deep blue eyes, her high color, her smooth light hair, her clear voice—clean-cut and quick, yet soft—engaged his fancy. He wanted to hear her speak again.

“Lee Dodd discouraging you?” he asked.

“You know him?” asked Frances.

“Next-door neighbor. That is, two miles from my place.”

“And now we’re your neighbors.”

She looked at him, thinking it fortunate to meet so attractive a Westerner at the outset of their adventure. Perhaps, she warned herself, beating out the sudden spark of too glowing an interest, perhaps it was only his broad-brimmed hat and his tan and his eyes and the way his ears set.

Meanwhile Louise was handing him the letter and asking,—

“Is it as desolate as it sounds?”

It depended on the weather, the doctor replied. They should really have waited till the middle or end of April to begin their homesteading. March was tricky, a bad gamble. Lee Dodd’s shack was not built for cold weather. The doctor himself had a “soddy,” but even so preferred the city through

March. Still, plenty of families lived their winters in tar-paper shacks. With plenty of wood and coal and warm clothing, they could probably keep going.

He sized them up as game. Frances, obviously, was the hardier of the two. He knew, or imagined he knew, what she had looked like as a baby, and what, in the matronly years to come, she would look like. He hoped nothing would ever happen to spoil the serious, yet up-cornered mouth. She would be the rare old lady whose grandchildren would visit her, not as a duty, but from choice. And she would manage to keep ahead of them, the young scamps.

At this point in his reverie, the doctor caught himself. Why, the girl couldn't be much over twenty-two or twenty-three, and here he was, almost jealous of her grandchildren. Ridiculous! He grinned at his folly, but did not abate his interest.

Of the other passengers, two cowboys took turns sitting on each other's lap in the front seat next to the driver. A cross-roads storekeeper and a sheepherder shared the two small folding seats in the tonneau with a nervous fat man, whose ampleness spanned the space between the two seats and abutted precariously upon their edges. As the car twisted and lurched in the frozen ruts of the trail, one side of the fat man would occasionally slip down and get wedged between the seats. The first time this happened, it caused hilarious merriment. But, "God, this is no time to laugh!" he exclaimed. "My wife may be dying!" And despite the absurd irrelevance of this comment, the laughter ceased, for it was known that he had come a hundred miles to get a doctor.

Along the Bison Skull Trail the stage bumped and twisted its way, in and out, among buttes and bad lands. Dwellings were seldom to be seen. The great

potent emptiness of the brown rolling country, patched here and there with drifts of old snow, dotted now and again with cattle and sheep grazing in the more sheltered places, had to the two women a stark and terrible grandeur. The end of March was at hand, but no hint of spring was in the land. The mottling of sunshine and cloud-shadows brought out subtle colorings, and relieved somewhat the threat of sombreness. "It's the kind of country," thought Louise to herself, "that reaches out and gets hold of you, for all that it looks so hard and inhospitable and uncompromising. It throws a spell, and you belong to it."

Partly to throw off this very spell, partly to make conversation, Frances remarked,—

"This is going to be the kind of day that's crisp and cold about the edges, and soft and warm in the middle."

"You a warranted weather prophet?" asked a cow-boy.

"I hear they guarantee weather prophets like the rest of the mail-order supplies in the East," said the storekeeper, who nursed a special grievance against the mail-order business.

The doctor explained: "It takes a brave man to prophesy March weather out in this country!"

Whereupon the fat man queried anxiously, "You don't think the weather'll delay us?"

To which a unanimous chorus of "Hope not" gave him dubious comfort.

But soon the fickle sun was cringing before a fierce, threatening wind, and the temperature began to drop. The car's side-curtains were put up to keep out the gale. The isinglass patches in the curtains were opaque with dust and mud, and a neat circle, five

inches in diameter, directly in front of the driver, was the only transparent part of the wind-shield. Deprived of the landscape the passengers' attention turned upon one another. A few questions were asked and answered. Conversation did not flourish, however. The fat man's anguish, the wringing of his hands, his impatience for more speed, his frequent appeals to the doctor for impossible assurances, sat heavily upon the spirits of the company. He seemed to resent the doctor's interest in the two women, as if that were delaying the car's progress.

The journey grew more and more uncomfortable. The trail, nowhere good, became rougher, more twisting, with sudden steep ascents and descents. The wind shook and buffeted the car. The temperature fell with malevolent persistence. The passengers shrank huddled into their wraps, stamped their feet, rubbed their hands, and made other vain attempts to get warm.

At noon, when they drew up at the Half-way House, the fat man wrung his hands anew. "Good God!" he cried, "this is no time to eat. Look at the weather! My wife—"

"Say!" exclaimed a hungry cowboy, "your baby ain't the only kid ever born in this county! Can't you cut your groaning for a while?"

But the doctor interrupted curtly with "Pull in your teeth, Teddy. You're not married."

"Righto!" retorted the cowboy with good-nature. "You ain't neither. I vote we let the girls decide."

Dinner was foregone.

About three o'clock in the afternoon the stage wrenched itself out of the trail-ruts, and turned onto the rough trackless prairie.

"Your outfit's along here somewhere soon," said a cowboy.

The fat man groaned anew at the delay which this stop meant. "Will it take long to get their things off the trailer?" he asked, almost resentfully.

No, it would take only a few minutes. Presently the stage stopped. Everyone got out of the car and bent against the wind to the task of unloading furniture and trunks and boxes. The fat man, helpless and awkward in his very eagerness to be of help, almost wept at the delay. This was less than five minutes, but the consciousness of a sick woman forty miles beyond made it seem a long time.

"Don't bother to untie anything!" exclaimed Frances. "We can do everything ourselves. Yes, we have tools, matches, everything. Yes, of course we can put up the beds!"

"I'm sorry," said the fat man gratefully, as he climbed into the car. "If it wasn't for my wife—"

"Yes, yes, all right, hurry off!" Louise and Frances cried at the same time.

And with shouts of "Good luck!" "We'll come and see you soon," and the like, the stage was off. Louise and Frances were alone with their property.

II

It was too cold to stay outside long enough to get the first proper impression of the little tar-paper shack. That it was a tiny black speck in the vast boundless landscape; that no other dwelling was in sight; that the wooden strips holding the tar-paper in place were nailed on at neat intervals; that a small stovepipe stuck out of the curving roof at a rakish angle; these things they took in at a glance, and called the place "cunning."

They hurried inside, and threw their arms about each other.

"O Fran! it *is* really true! We're here. I never entirely believed it, even on the way!"

"But let's light the fire before we do anything. I'm frozen brittle!" exclaimed Frances. "Now let's see. The matches are in the box marked food. You open that, while I start on the bedding."

"Here's the food-box," replied Louise. "Wow! these tools are cold."

She pried open the lid of the box. The odor of tea and coffee, the sight of many small boxes and cans, were heartening.

"No matches here," said Louise, blithely. "Have another guess."

"Oh, yes, they're there. You're probably looking for a small box. It's a big one—a year's supply. I saw him put it in myself."

At last, "Here it is." Then, "No, this is too heavy. It's soap."

"Can't be," replied Fran. "The soap's in a box by itself." Yet she left the case she was unpacking, and came over to inspect the box where the matches should have been.

"Why, we didn't order that kind of soap!" she exclaimed. "Anyhow, how absurd to pack soap with food! It's a mistake. The matches *must* be in this box, for I told him to put them there, so that we could have a fire and food as soon as we got here. The box is the same size—"

Here Frances broke off, and caught a quick breath, disturbed at a sudden memory: for when she was ordering the groceries, a woman from a laundry had come hurrying into the store for some soap. And Frances, because her order was a long one and would

take some time, had let the grocer wait on the other woman. What if the grocer had sent the matches to the woman— Her heart gave a sudden turn, but her mind darted away from the fear.

"He must have packed the matches in another box," she said. "We'll have to open them all, till we come to them."

"I move we have a cup of tea, first," said Louise.

"Righto! I'll chop some ice from the frozen water-barrel, and we can melt—"

At that moment it flashed upon them both that fire was essential to tea. They laughed, Frances a bit hollowly. Louise, not realizing the terrible possibility *that there might not be any matches*, enjoyed the joke.

"It's like the Walrus and the Carpenter! 'And this was very odd, because there weren't any matches.' I'll have to write that to Jim. He's probably sizzling down there on his old Equator. Just think, Fran, what nice warm work building bridges over the Equator must be!"

Jim was the man Louise was to marry, after his engineering exploit was finished. And every experience was something to write to Jim. Frances sometimes thought that Louise lived entirely as a sort of preface, savoring life only as it could be passed on to Jim.

Although their feet and fingers ached with cold, and every breath was visible in the chill room, the exercise of unpacking warmed them a little. They worked with their outdoor wraps on. By half-past four it was beginning to get dark. Despite the cold, Louise seemed in high spirits.

"'Adventure One—The Mislaid Match,'" she said. "That would be a good title for a story. O Fran,

why don't we write our adventures? We're going to have them wholesale. The ride out was almost an adventure, with the poor worried fat man, and all. I hope they got to his wife in time. 'The Rigors of Ranching' wouldn't be a bad title. It would be awful to get sick out here. I'm glad we're both husky, although it would be convenient for the present to have a delicate appetite. If we don't find the matches soon, I'll begin on raw food. You know we had no lunch."

Frances was weighing the possibility of not finding the matches. Half an hour would bring darkness. The beds had not been put up yet. She did not wish to communicate her fear to Louise; but finally she suggested that it would not be a bad idea to begin on raw food, and get one bed ready before dark, on the chance that they might not find the matches till the next day.

The stiff frozen bread crumbled when they cut it. They opened a can of beans and of sardines, and found them both frozen solid.

"I knew it was cold, but I didn't realize it was *this* cold!" said Louise, as they broke the frozen food into small chunks. "You suck a bean and a sardine till they melt; then you slip them between your chattering teeth, and the temperature does the rest. Quite a technique! This *is* an adventure!"

But despite their hunger, they could eat very little of the frozen food. They turned greedily, however, to some cakes of chocolate.

"What next?" asked Louise, when they had finished. "We can't wash the dishes, because there's no water. Besides, it's too dark to do anything. I move we shiver to bed and get warm. Oh, I say, we can't even wash ourselves, or brush our teeth!"

"From furs to flannelette," said Frances, attempting a joke. "We'll need flannelette nightgowns. See, it's begun to snow!"

It was all but dark outside. A mad and furious wind raged, driving fine helpless snowflakes from the last vestiges of twilight into the blackness of night. It had the momentum of infinite distances, uncurbed. Amazing that the little frame shack, with its single thickness of tar-paper, could withstand it!

"How terrifying this wind would be on the lonely moors of England, in a Hardy novel!" exclaimed Louise, as the two girls, quaking with cold, undressed.

Frances repressed an impulse to say that it was more terrifying here and now. She felt just the least impatience with Louise's habit of interpreting everything for its literary value, or for its interest to Jim. But she remembered that Louise did not know about the woman who had interrupted her order just when she was buying the matches; that Louise did not know that there might be no matches, and that the possibility of freezing to death was more than a literary contingency. And Louise must not know this till the last possible minute—some time to-morrow.

Undressing and slipping between the cold sheets was like a penance. But, having had time to put up only one bed, they had piled all their bedding on it, and they counted on this extra covering, and on the heat from their bodies, to get them warm.

It was too early to go to sleep. Waiting for warmth, they talked. They discussed the arrangement of the room. "Let's get it all fixed up to-morrow, and take some pictures, and I'll send them to Jim with the first person who goes by. O Fran, I wish you had a Jim to be sending things to!"

"It is customary, I believe, to wait till after marriage before patronizing and pitying your old-maid friends," laughed Frances. In her heart she was thinking, "Poor Louise! She has so much to live for. And poor Jim! But we must keep laughing as long as we can, now." Aloud she continued, "The room is larger than I thought. What would you say were the dimensions?"

Louise guessed twenty-five by thirty. Frances laughed. "Never: twenty-two by twenty-six, at the most."

Louise said that rooms ought to come in figures divisible by five. They nonsensd on, waiting for warmth. Notwithstanding the number of covers, they were warm only where their bodies touched. Sharp cold draughts pried their way into the bed. They could not get warm. Frances finally found courage to get out onto the icy floor, snatch their coats, furs, and sweaters, and pile these on top of the bed. She scrambled back under the covers, quaking with cold. The extra covering apparently had no effect.

After a few hours, Louise fell into a restless sleep. But Frances could not sleep. It was not only the cold that kept her awake. There was black panic and fear. And when at last she could shake a part of her mind free of panic, she began weighing the possibilities of freezing to death: wondering how long it took; wondering if the weather would change; wondering if anyone would happen by their shack; wondering if, by any mad chance, the stage would come out of its course, and go past their homestead on its way back to the city; wondering if, by striking two pieces of metal together, she could start a fire. Boy Scouts, she had heard, learned how to do that.

It was not as if it were a wet cold. Perhaps, if she cut some tiny shavings, and chopped them fine—

Would the doctor stop on his way back to the city? She had liked the doctor.

She knew that she was in no way responsible for the accident. That had happened in spite of more than ordinary care. She had checked over all the supplies; the grocer had pointed to a package and had said, "Matches." Yet a feeling of responsibility troubled her. The idea of homesteading had been hers. She had suggested it to Louise as an interesting thing to do during Jim's absence. She had argued against the objections of Louise's family, and had persuaded them that it was a safe and sane project. Somehow, now, she must pull Louise through.

The other stage passengers had said they would come to see them soon. How soon? She hoped the doctor would be the first to come.

She tried to recall all the stories she had read about Arctic explorations. She could remember no details, only general impressions that one could stay alive for days; that after the pain came a numbness, and then a torpor. The thing to do, if the feeling of numbness came, was to stay awake.

What would Louise say when she realized the situation? Louise was of a temperament always on the crest or in the trough of the wave. Most of the time, especially since her engagement, she had been on the crest. Frances felt it almost a mission to keep her on the crest. However black the outlook, she must see that Louise should cling fast to hope.

III

When Louise awoke at daybreak, Frances had a plan. Louise should stay in bed while Frances opened the trunks and got out their warmest underwear. No need for two of them to fumble around in the cold room before they were dressed.

"By the way," Louise interrupted, "can't you do a little weather prophesying to-day? You were right about the edges, yesterday, but it certainly was not soft and warm in the middle."

Frances lifted her head from the pillow to look out the window. "Why, there's nothing but snow in the world. It's drifted up to our window-sill. If the sun comes out we'll have a great dazzle!"

"That's a safe prophecy," laughed Louise. "I could do almost as well myself. But keep your head down close to the pillow. A hurricane has just intruded. I suppose I have feet, but I can hardly feel them."

They lay a while, shivering, yet savoring the few patches of warmth their bodies made; not daring to change their positions, for fear of contact with a cold part of the bed. Frances delayed the getting up as long as possible: every moment's delay was just one moment's more hope for Louise. For herself, too. After all, there might be matches. She had traveled far from the fierce fear that there might not be any, to the faint hope of the opposite. It was a hard downward traveling. At the bottom of the road stood despair, beckoning. Louise, luckily, had not yet passed even the first signpost of fear. Extremely uncomfortable, she was taking a perverse enjoyment in her discomfort: it would make such a good story.

Frances insisted that they each put on three suits of underwear, and three pairs of stockings; and

Louise, though she thought the idea absurd, since they would surely find the matches presently, consented. That too would make a good tale to write to Jim. Frances then suggested that one of them look for the matches, while the other put things away and set the house in order. Things in their present disorder were so confusing that one could never be quite sure whether or not a box had been searched for the matches. Besides,—and this was sheer invention on Frances's part,—a neighbor might drop in at any moment.

So, after a breakfast of bread and butter and sweet chocolate, they set to work, Louise hunting for the matches, Frances putting things away, arranging their belongings, and frequently calling Louise from her task, to consult on the placing of some article, to help move something heavy, to hand Frances some tool as she stood perched on the convertible chair-step-ladder, hanging the attractive cretonne curtains. Chatting gayly, she seized every possible pretext to prolong the hunt for the matches.

Lee Dodd had left the shack neat and clean. Save for the brightly polished stove, it had been empty. But in the course of her explorations Frances found on a high shelf a baby's shoe and a lady's pink garter. Here was food for speculation. (This will keep me talking quite a while, thought Frances to herself.) They had assumed Lee Dodd's bachelorhood. Was there then a Mrs. Lee Dodd? From his letter and from his singular replies, they tried to reconstruct the man and his possible family.

But in the midst of the discussion Louise stopped short.

"Fran!"

And Frances, though she knew what was coming, asked, "What?"

"What if the grocer made a mistake? What if—
O Fran—what if there aren't any matches?"

"Have you looked everywhere?"

"No; but what if—"

"Come on, don't be morbid. Time enough to consider that after we've done hunting."

But a silence fell upon Louise, and for the first time she was frightened. She turned to her search, trying to conceal her panic.

"Want to change jobs?" asked Frances.

No, Louise preferred to do the unpacking and to keep on searching.

"I wonder if it can be much colder outside," said Frances later, when for a few moments they left their tasks to take some calisthenic exercises. Their ears and faces as well as their hands and feet ached with the cold.

They opened the door. The snow, drifted half-way up to the knob, was frozen stiff. Frances got a shovel, planning to make a path, but the wind-packed snow was too hard to make the effort worth while. She stepped up on the snow, rather gingerly at first, expecting it to give way; but it bore her weight. Suddenly she saw a thermometer. It registered twelve degrees below zero. The wind had fallen, and the out-of-doors seemed no colder than the house.

The two girls walked a little way from their house, and looked about them. There was nothing between them and the horizon—nothing; not a tree, not a landmark; only a rolling whiteness, smooth, blank, unfeatured. It lay supine, frozen, helpless, under a gray crouching sky. Only a terrible stillness, a silence that muffled all hope.

Without speaking, they walked back to the house. Frances wished passionately for some way to spare

Louise the fear and despair, wished for some word that would not sound like an empty reassurance to a frightened child. What was Louise thinking? What would she say when she knew?

The shack was as cold as outside, only it had a different smell. Not a particularly pleasant smell, yet, suggesting shelter, it was welcome. They closed the door and returned to their tasks.

At last everything had been searched, everything was in order. Except for a comment now and then as to where some object should be placed, there had been little conversation since their walk. At noon they stopped for food. Louise tried a joke.

"Now for the groaning board!" she said, and then suddenly she was weeping, "I'm so cold! so terribly, terribly cold! Except my feet: they're burning hot, and pricking and itching, and I want to scream! Oh, Jim would be so worried if he knew!"

"Scream, dear, scream. Let's have the comfort of screaming, if we wish, and of saying what we are thinking."

"Your feet, too?"

"Not yet."

"How long have you known—have you feared?"

"Since yesterday." And Frances told about the woman who had interrupted her to order the soap.

"O Fran, dear Fran! And you didn't tell me. You—you wanted me to have hope, to cling to hope, as long as possible? You're splendid! O Fran!"

There was relief in weeping. Even Frances, the strong, the steady, welcomed the dear relief of tears.

Then they faced the situation. What should be done? What were the chances?

There were two chances. Someone might come. Probably the doctor would come by. His home-

stead, he had said, was only a few miles away. Possibly he would stop at his homestead on his way back to the city. If so,—and possibly if not,—he might stop to see them. If not, someone else would surely come in time. It would be a matter of endurance until someone should come.

“We’ll be awfully uncomfortable,” said Frances. “But as long as we’re uncomfortable, we’re safe. The danger doesn’t really set in until we begin to get numb. Then we have to keep each other awake. We have food enough to keep us alive a long time, even though it is frozen and unpalatable. Later, we’ll have to take turns sleeping, and while one of us sleeps, the other will have to rub her arms and legs, to keep them from freezing. This may not be the scientific way, but it may work.”

“And the other chance?” asked Louise.

“Oh, it’s the faintest hope. We might try to make a fire from a spark. I have wanted to try all day, but it’s so suggestive of despair that I’ve kept putting it off. We might try striking two pieces of metal together, and make a spark. But it’s such a thin little shaving of a hope. Now if we were Indians, or if we had some flint and whatever goes with it, there might be a chance of success.”

Louise grasped eagerly at the straw, and became enthusiastic. Boy Scouts had done it, she had heard. Then surely Frances, the clever competent Frances could do it. She helped make the preparations. She tore tissue paper into tiny shreds. She whittled to small bits pieces of dry sage-brush. She and Frances arranged these scraps in the dishpan, and with a somewhat awed feeling, got the poker and a screwdriver.

“We ought to have a chant, a fire-worshippers’ chant, to start the thing off,” said Louise. She had found laughter again. “If Jim could only see us now!”

But soon the hope petered out. Occasionally a spark flew, and fell into the fuel, but the longed-for combustion did not occur. After an hour they gave it up.

Then Frances said, suddenly, "We must rub your feet with snow or ice. I had forgotten. That's the thing to do for chilblains! We'll chop some of that frozen snow into small bits."

Louise at first protested. Quaking with cold, the thought of cold snow on her feet and legs made her cringe. But anything was better than the fearful burning and itching.

She was surprised, when Frances applied the snow, to find that it felt like warm water on her feet. Blessed discovery! They rubbed their ears, their faces, their fingers, with the snow. It gave them a measure of easement.

That night they went to bed with all their clothes on, including woolen caps. They decided that it was safe for them both to risk sleeping that night. They ate as much supper as they could force themselves to swallow, trying frozen ham this time. And they went through all the physical exercises they could think of before retiring. Both beds were up now, but they slept together for the added warmth.

From the bed—it was still light—they surveyed the room.

"It *is* attractive!" exclaimed Louise, her eye running from the cheery curtains, patterned with small yellow flowers and occasional diminutive bluebirds with red tufted heads, to the two comfortable willow chairs, with cushions of the same material. The unpainted deal table, with its brown desk-blotter, some writing materials, and a soft brown-shaded lamp, made a respectable library table.

"Some day," said Frances, "we'll paint that, and the desk chair, and the bookshelves a deep rich creamy color, to match the chiffonier and mirror. Shall we paint the dining-room table, too, or shall we leave it as it is?"

The "dining-room table" stood toward the back of the room near the stove, a strip of Russian peasant embroidery and two squat brass candle-sticks, with orange candles, "lending it tone between meals," according to Louise. Hanging along the wall near the stove, bright new aluminum pots and pans added cheer to the room. A folding screen concealed the trunks and empty boxes. Two or three braided rugs, which Frances had rescued from her uncle's New England attic, lay on the rough unfinished floor. Yes, even in the fading light, it was attractive.

But it was cold, aching cold; and notwithstanding their talk of painting furniture, and getting some gayly colored prints for the walls, their hearts were chilled and preoccupied, Louise's with anxiety for Jim, and Frances's—

"Why," thought Frances, "why is that doctor always in my mind? Anyone could rescue us. Anyone with a match. A slim little piece of wood, tipped at one end with a speck of sulphur, would save our lives. It need not be the doctor." Yet it was of the doctor that she thought most often.

Somehow the night was lived through. Frances, having lain awake the previous night, snatched bits of dream-troubled sleep. A fat man in a machine was trying to prevent one of the cowboys from amputating her feet with the screwdriver. "This is no time to be tending to chilblains!" the fat man was crying. "My wife may be dying!" And the cowboy answered,—only he had the doctor's voice, "Pull in

your teeth, Fatty. Let the lady decide about her own feet." "I'm sorry to detain you," Frances replied, "but he *must* cut off my feet."

"The craziest dream!" she exclaimed to Louise as she woke, and recounted it. "And the most absurd part was that I actually wanted him to do it, and that the sensation was pleasurable. When he got through he handed the feet to the other cowboy, and told him to put them in the closet next to the dancing-slippers. Then he took my temperature, shouted, 'Up to normal!' and they all rushed out. Then I woke up, and my feet are burning and itching like the deuce!"

Louise found no sleep that night. She stayed awake with her fear, and with a resolve "to live up to Frances" to the end. Would rescue come? Poor Jim! she thought. And more often than she knew, she said it aloud.

The next day they tried an experiment. They walked in opposite directions from the house, as far as they could, having agreed not to go out of sight of the house or of each other. Possibly they could see some other dwelling. "Which way does he live?" thought Frances, gazing around at the unanswering horizon. Nothing came of the undertaking. They returned exhausted, scarcely able to articulate, so stiff were their faces from the wind.

They tried to read, but could not hold a book in their hands. Moreover, their own thoughts seemed more important than anything they could find in books.

They took turns rubbing each other's feet with snow.

"Jim will be so worried!" exclaimed Louise for the hundredth time. "He'll think something terrible has happened."

Frances was silent. To think that Louise did not realize that something terrible *was* happening! Frances almost wished she had a Jim on whom to project her worry!

They stayed in bed most of the next day. The cold seemed to come up from under the bed; so, with great difficulty, because of their stiffness and weakness, they lifted the mattresses to the floor. Yet this gave them no relief.

If only the doctor would come!

Soon they lost track of time. They did not know how many days they had been alone. They only knew that the sun had not shone, that the sky was lowering and gray, that sometimes it snowed, that the thermometer—now their only immediate interest—wavered between twenty and forty below, that the wind raged and fell and raged again.

They began to feel numb. Pain ceased. It was as if drowsiness were breathed down upon them.

"We mustn't let ourselves sleep!" exclaimed Frances. "We must not!"

Then a wonderful thing happened. The long deep silence was broken. A sound was heard outside.

A sheep, a weak staggering sheep bleated outside their door.

"Poor thing!" they exclaimed. "Poor helpless beastie! Strayed from the fold, literally."

And suddenly they were overwhelmed with tears of pity for the sheep. Once more their tears were like a gift.

They coaxed the sheep inside, and tried to feed it bread, but it was too weak to eat.

"But it's still warm!" exclaimed Louise, as she hugged the animal close. "Come, get near it. Feel here, under the fur, Fran; it's warm!"

Then Frances had an idea. It was a fearsome thought, loathsome, but it might help.

"Could you help me do something terrible, Louise? Could you keep your nerve? It might keep us going a few days longer. Someone is bound to come soon. We—we must kill it, and drink its blood."

"O Fran!"

Yet they did it. Louise, her face averted, held the helpless creature as Frances cut its throat. Crying, they drank the blood—all of it.

Then the desire for sleep was on them again, a terrible passion, a fierce hunger, a thing not to be withstood.

"Let's give up, Fran. Let's write our farewells and go to bed."

Scarcely able to hold a pen, Louise wrote a few lines to Jim.

"My dearest, if I could only spare you this anguish! There was an accident: no matches were packed with our things. We are freezing to death. Here is my love, all of it. And my arms about you."

Frances found she wanted to write to no one but the doctor. But that was too absurd a whim to be indulged. Instead, she wrote to Jim. Her letter was longer than Louise's. She told him how much Louise's love for him had saved her of anguish. She told, too, in some detail, of their experience: their fight against the weather; how they had killed the sheep and drunk its blood; how they had hoped for rescue. "We thought a certain doctor, who had come out on the stage with us, might stop here on his way back, and we hoped, and then wished passionately for his coming." Frances paused here. Should she allow herself the luxury of that impersonal statement?

She let it stand. She could not have written the

letter over again. She could scarcely finish it, as it was, for sleepiness, yet she goaded herself to the end. She left it open on the table, weighting it with a volume of Conrad. "Rather fitting!" she thought. Then she wrote on a large sheet of paper, "We have no matches, and are freezing to death," and nailed this to the outside of the door. She read the thermometer. It registered twenty below.

Every movement required tremendous effort, nightmare effort. Yet, coming back into the room, she looked around, walked back to the "dining-room table," and straightened the strip of Russian embroidery that had fallen awry. "Now I guess we're ship-shape."

Then, as she got into bed, she said to Louise,—

"Can you endure to take the cap off your head for a few minutes? If we pull our hair down over our faces it may keep our noses from freezing."

"Kiss me," said Louise sleepily; and Frances held her close. "I love you, Fran, so much—next to Jim."

"I love you, too. Funny how we don't say these things in life. I mean—"

"I know," Louise replied drowsily. And then, "If only Jim were here!"

Then, still in a close embrace, they yielded themselves to sleep.

IV

After ten weatherbound days in the "soddy" of the grief-stricken fat man; after helping to dig through the snow and into the fire-thawed earth to make a grave for the fat man's wife and baby; after helping him put a rude fence about the lonely grave,—to keep the cattle from tramping over it,—the doctor started out on horseback for the town ironi-

cally named Sweetweather, the stage terminus. If the stage would risk the deep snow, now beginning to soften under the shy advances of the long-truant sun, he would stop to see how "those girls" had weathered the blizzard and the bitter weather. They had been on his mind. Nothing could have happened to them, really. They were a healthy, capable sort,—especially Miss Stead,—and much better equipped for cold weather, doubtless, than many homesteaders. However, they were new to the country. Had they brought all that they needed?

At Sweetweather, where he spent the night, Little Willie was emphatic: the stage would not start till after the weather had "set." He tried to dissuade the doctor from going on ahead on horseback. "Them girls is all right. And you don't need to go to your outfit. You weren't counting on getting to it for another week, anyhow. You can't trust this sun.

Yet the doctor ventured on. The stage was to stop at "the girls'," when it did go back to the city. The doctor would leave word with "the girls" as to where he would wait for it.

The trip was far more laborious than he had expected. The horse plodded painfully through the snow. In one place a queer series of lumpy mounds attracted the doctor's attention. The horse shied. The doctor dismounted and scraped into the snow with his spur, which finally struck something hard. Further investigation proved it to be a sheep, frozen to death. A whole flock, it seemed, pressed close together, had frozen there.

"The spring should be coming, and these seems to be nothing but death in the land," he said, and shook himself, as if to throw off the thought of death. "I suppose I ought to be feeling gay, or pleased, or

something, to be making a call; but there's only apprehension in my heart, and a great weariness."

The light was falling, when of a sudden he spied the little black shack. He whistled: he had expected to see the smoke first, for the wind was coming from the direction of the house. And here was the shack, and no smoke. What could have happened? He spurred his horse. Soon he could see the white paper on the door. Perhaps they had gone somewhere else, and the paper was merely a notice. Yet his heart sank.

There was hope, just a ghost of hope. Their hearts were still beating. He lighted a lamp, and placed it as far from the bed as possible. "Lucky a doctor found them," he said between his teeth, as he set to work. "Some fool might have lighted a fire at once."

With great difficulty he disentwined the two bodies and removed the clothing, being careful to avoid a sudden jerky movement. So frozen were their fingers and toes, that an awkward manipulation might easily break them off. He poured brandy down their throats. Then he brought in snow, and packed it about their arms and legs, and moving their hair, which had caked with ice from their frozen breath, he packed the soft snow on their faces. The rest of their bodies had escaped frost-bite.

But their limbs looked dead. Perhaps they could not be saved. Still, he remembered an account, in a medical journal, of a man who had been exposed four days, one of whose limbs had been apparently dead, but who, after seventy hours of careful treatment, had been able to walk about with nothing worse than a frost-bite on his heel. He remembered vivid-

ly the description of the treatment. The frozen leg had been bathed in ice-cold water for two hours, and then enveloped in furs. Then there had been friction with the feathery side of a birdskin; then with snow. The treatment had been continuous for twenty-four hours. The temperature of the room had been gradually raised with lamps.

He looked about the room for some substitute for the birdskin, and for the first time saw the open letters on the table. The sheep incident fed his hopes: they had had something with real food-value. "They're a plucky lot, and they certainly used their heads!" he said aloud. He could use the sheep's skin. But before he turned to look for the sheep, his eye took in the next sentence of the letter: "We thought a certain doctor, who had come out on the stage with us, might stop here on his way back, and we hoped and then wished passionately for his coming." Perhaps, then, she had been drawn to him as he had to her? But, no, that was sheer fatuousness. Of course a doctor would be the person hoped for. Nevertheless, all the depression which had weighed him down since morning seemed to fall from him. He forgot, too, his weariness. He knew only that there was a hard fight ahead, and that against a million odds, with all his heart and all his science, he would fight it.

He must do more than save the lives of the two girls. He must save for them their arms and legs and ears and noses; he must fight against the coming of Arctic fever, pneumonia, gangrene, erysipelas, and against other fearful possibilities.

He worked all night, watching anxiously for signs of returning consciousness. Toward morning Louise's eyelids flickered. Then there really was hope! He

had said it over and over to himself, but only now did he really believe it. His spirit was upborne. Now if only Frances would give some sign.

Hours passed, yet Frances gave no sign. He worked on, ceaselessly. Louise woke and slept and woke and slept. Once she spoke.

"Frances?"

"She's come round all right," he answered; and he willed it with all his might. His will was a flame, searing him, goading him on. It was a thing more than mere will. It was—could it be—love?

At night the miracle happened. Frances's eyes, half-open, heavy, uncomprehending, were idly upon him. He stopped, and caught his breath. The eyes opened wider, and—as if her mind as well as her vision were gathered into focus—they felt out toward him with question and with understanding.

An ecstasy of thanksgiving gushed up in his heart, flooding him. The joy was almost pain. He turned his head away. Then he pulled himself together, and went on with his work.

Three sunny, thawing days passed before the sound of the chugging stage fell upon their welcoming ears. The doctor was still at work, never having stopped to sleep. It had been a long but a victorious fight. Complete recovery, though not yet achieved, was assured.

He had never once been conscious of exhaustion; but when Little Willie came into the room, an ally from the outside world, Dr. Calhoun said only, "Get some woman," sank into a chair, and was at once asleep.

Frances and Louise explained,—they had long since regained speech,—and Little Willie started off at once for a neighbor.

"I'm glad he doesn't snore," said Frances, absently. "Does Jim?"

"Why, what a question!" She stopped a gasping moment; then, "O Fran!"

"What utter nonsense! What do you mean? How absurd! Why, I hardly know the man! Besides—" She broke off. Then, with apparent irrelevance, "O Louise, I do wish you had your Jim here."

Louise paused a moment. Then she retorted, "It is customary, I believe, to wait till after marriage, and it is only decent to wait till after engagement, before patronizing and pitying one's old-maid friends!"

Her eyes and her voice and her laugh were sunny with understanding. Here was a tale, oh, what a tale, to write to Jim!

QUESTIONS

1. What in this story first arouses your interest?
2. Contrast the modern with the old-time Western stage coach.
3. Describe briefly the passengers in the stage.
4. What sort of country was it over which the journey was made?
5. Explain how it happens that the girls are without matches.
6. Which of the girls feels responsible for their predicament? Why? To what extent?
7. Describe the attempts of the girls to make a fire when it became an established fact that there were no matches.
8. Why were their methods unsuccessful? Report on the proper method of making a fire without matches.
9. Describe the room in the little tar-paper house after the girls had put it in order.
10. Relate the events of the first, second, and third days spent in the shack.
11. What precautions may be taken to keep a person from freezing?
12. What have you learned from this story about the treatment of frozen limbs?
13. What value was derived from the sheep's blood?

14. How do the girls seem to be affected by the realization that there is nothing more they can do for themselves?
15. Why does the last sentence seem particularly appropriate?
16. What is the difference between a "soddy" and a tar-paper shack?
17. Point out passages which illustrate the author's thorough knowledge of the country.
18. Is there a single point in the story open to question?
19. What is the final impression left with you after reading this story?
20. Prepare a report to give before the class on the subject of homesteaders.

A MATTER OF LOYALTY

BY

LAWRENCE PERRY

LAWRENCE PERRY

(1875-)

Lawrence Perry, journalist, author, lover of sports, confines his writings almost wholly to tales of the out-of-doors and of athletic prowess.

"A Matter of Loyalty" is typical of this author's style; it is the thrilling tale of the stroke-oar who, "exalted by something nameless," spurred his crew on to win against overpowering odds from the ancient rival crew. At other times it is his fiction quarterback who scores the necessary last-moment touchdown, or a magic putter making breath-taking birdies when all hope has been lost.

It is a wholesome, sporting spirit which Lawrence Perry conveys, not only in fiction but in his journalism as well, for from the year 1900 until 1920 he reported every important athletic event. Under his pen-name, "Fair Play," he achieved national recognition in this field.

He was born in Newark, N. J., in 1875, and received his education in public and private schools. He entered Princeton, but was obliged, because of family illness, to leave before completing his freshman year. He remains, however, an ardent Princetonian, belonging to many Nassua clubs.

"The Fullback," "The Big Game," "For the Game's Sake," "Touchdowns" are novels from his pen that any young person might enjoy.

Some of his short stories are entitled:

Technicalities

David Harmon's Quarterback

Nothing but a Prayer

Man to Man

Matter of Sentiment

Give Way

A MATTER OF LOYALTY

Standing in the bow of the launch, Dr. Nicholls, coach of the Baliol crew, leaned upon his megaphone, his eyes fixed upon two eight-oared crews resting upon their oars a hundred feet away. From his hand dangled a stop-watch. The two crews had just completed a four-mile race against the watch.

A grim light came into the deeply set gray eyes of Jim Deacon as the coach put the watch into his pocket. Deacon was the stroke of the second varsity, an outfit which in aquatics bears the same relation to a university eight as the scrub team does to a varsity football eleven. But in the race just completed the second varsity had been much of a factor—surprisingly, dishearteningly so. Nip and tuck it had been, the varsity straining to drop the rival boat astern, but unable to do so. At the finish not a quarter of a length, not fifteen feet, had separated the two prows; a poor showing for the varsity to have made with the great rowing classic of the season coming on apace—a poor showing, that is, assuming the time consumed in the four-mile trip was not especially low.

Only the coach could really know whether the time was satisfactory or not. But Jim Deacon suspected that it was poor, his idea being based upon knowledge he had concerning the capabilities of his own crew; in other words, he knew it was only an average second varsity outfit. The coach knew it too. That was the reason his jaws were set, his eyes vacant. At length he shook his head.

“Not good, boys—not good.” His voice was gentle, though usually he was a rip-roaring mentor. “Varsity, you weren’t rowing. That’s the answer—not rowing together. What’s the matter, eh?”

“I thought, Dr. Nicholls, that the rhythm was very good——”

The coach interrupted Rollins, the captain, with a gesture.

“Oh, rhythm! Yes, you row prettily enough. You look well. I should hope so, at this time of the season. But you’re not shoving the boat fast; you don’t pick up and get her moving. You’re leaking power

somewhere; as a matter of fact, I suspect you're not putting the power in. I know you're not. Ashburton, didn't that lowering of your seat fix you? Well, then,"—as the young man nodded affirmatively—"how about your stretcher, Innis? Does it suit you now?"

As Innis nodded, signifying that it did, Deacon saw the coach's eyes turn to Doane, who sat at stroke of the varsity.

"Now," muttered the stroke of the second varsity, his eyes gleaming, "we'll hear something."

"Doane, is there anything the trouble with you? You're feeling well, aren't you?"

"Yes sir. Sure!" The boy flushed. Tall, straight, handsome he sat in the boat, fingering the oar-handle nervously. In appearance he was the ideal oarsman. And yet——

Deacon, watching the coach, could almost see his mind working. Now the time had come, the issue clearly defined. Another stroke must be tried and found not wanting, else the annual eight-oared rowing classic between those ancient universities Baliol and Shelburne would be decided before it was rowed.

Deacon flushed as the coach's glittering eyeglasses turned toward him. It was the big moment of the senior's four years at college. Four years! And six months of each of those years a galley-slave—on the machines in the rowing-room of the gymnasium, on the ice-infested river with the cutting winds of March sweeping free; then the more genial months with the voice of coach or assistant coach lashing him. Four years of dogged, unremitting toil with never the reward of a varsity seat, and now with the great regatta less than a week away, the big moment, the crown of all he had done.

Words seemed on the verge of the coach's lips. Deacon's eyes strained upon them as he sat stiffly in his seat. But no words came; the coach turned away.

"All right," he said spiritlessly. "Paddle back to the float."

The coxswains barked their orders; sixteen oars rattled in their locks; the glistening shells moved slowly homeward.

Tingling from his plunge in the river, Jim Deacon walked up the bluff from the boathouse to the group of cottages which constituted Baliol's rowing-quarters. Some of the freshman crew were playing indoor baseball on the lawn under the gnarled trees, and their shouts and laughter echoed over the river. Deacon stood watching them. His face was of the roughhewn type; in his two upper-class years his heavy frame had taken on a vast amount of brawn and muscle. Now his neck was meet for his head and for his chest and shoulders; long, slightly bowed limbs filled out a picture of perfect physique.

No one had known him really well in college. He was working his way through. Besides, he was a student in one of the highly scientific engineering courses which demanded a great deal of steady application. With no great aptitude for football—he was a bit slow-footed—with little time or inclination for social activities, he had concentrated upon rowing, not only as a diversion from his arduous studies, an ordered outlet for physical energy, but with the idea of going out into the world with that hallmark of a Baliol varsity oar which he had heard and believed was likely to stand him in stead in life. Baliol alumni, which include so many men of wealth and power, had a habit of not overlooking young graduates who have brought fame to their alma mater.

As Deacon stood watching the freshmen at play, Dick Rollins, the crew captain, came up.

"They sent down the time-trial results from the Shelburne quarters, Deacon."

Never in his life had one of the great men of the university spoken that many words, or half as many, to Jim Deacon, who stared at the speaker.

"The time—oh, yes; I see."

"They did twenty minutes, thirty seconds."

Deacon whistled.

"Well," he said at length, "you didn't get the boat moving much to-day." He wanted to say more, but could think of nothing. Words came rather hard with him.

"You nearly lugged the second shell ahead of us to-day, hang you."

"No use letting a patient die because he doesn't know he's sick."

Rollins grimaced.

"Yes, we were sick. Doc Nicholls knows a sick crew when he sees one. He—he thinks you're the needed tonic, Deacon."

"Eh?"

"He told me you were to sit in at stroke in Junior Doane's place to-morrow. I'd been pulling for the change the past few days. Now he sees it."

"You were pulling—— But you're Doane's roommate."

"Yes, it's tough. But Baliol first, you know."

Deacon stared at the man. He wanted to say something but couldn't. The captain smiled.

"Look here, Deacon; let's walk over toward the railroad a bit. I want to talk to you." Linking his arm through Deacon's, he set out through the yard toward the quaint old road with its little cluster of

farm cottages and rolling stone-walled meadow-land bathed in the light of the setting sun.

"Jim, old boy, you're a queer sort of a chap, and—and—the fact is, the situation will be a bit ticklish. You know what it means for a fellow to be thrown out of his seat just before a race upon which he has been counting heart and soul."

"I don't know. I can imagine."

"You see, it's Doane. You know about his father——"

"I know all about his father," was the reply.

"Eh?" Rollins stared at him, then smiled. "I suppose every rowing man at Baliol does. But you don't know as much as I do. On the quiet, he's the man who gave us the new boathouse last year. He's our best spender. He was an old varsity oar himself."

"Sure, I know."

"That's the reason the situation is delicate. Frankly, Jim, Doc Nicholls and the rest of us would have liked to see Junior Doane come through. I think you get what I mean. He's a senior; he's my best friend."

"He stroked the boat last year."

"Yes, and Shelburne beat us. Naturally he wants to get back at that crowd."

"But he can't—not if he strokes the boat, Rollins. If you don't know it, I'm telling you. If I thought different, I'd say so." Deacon abruptly paused after so long a speech.

"You don't have to tell me. I know it. We're not throwing a race to Shelburne simply to please old Cephas Doane, naturally. I know what you've got, Jim. So does Dr. Nicholls. You'll be in the varsity to-morrow. But here's the point of what I've been trying to say; Junior Doane hasn't been very decent to you——"

"Oh, he's been all right."

"Yes, I know. But he's a funny fellow; not a bit of a snob—I don't mean that, but—but——"

"You mean he hasn't paid much attention to me." Deacon smiled grimly. "Well, that's all right. As a matter of fact, I never really have got to know him. Still, I haven't got to know many of the fellows. Too busy. You haven't paid much attention to me, either; but I like you."

Rollins, whose father was a multimillionaire with family roots going deep among the rocks of Manhattan Island, laughed.

"Bully for you! You won't mind my saying so, Jim, but I had it in my mind to ask you to be a bit inconsequential—especially when Doane was around—about your taking his place. But I guess it isn't necessary."

"No,"—Deacon's voice was short—"it isn't."

"Junior Doane, of course, will be hard hit. He'll be game. He'll try to win back his seat. And he may; I warn you."

"If he can win it back, I want him to."

"Good enough!" The captain started to walk away, then turned back with sudden interest. "By the way, Jim, I was looking through the college catalogue this morning. You and Doane both come from Philadelphia, don't you?"

"Yes."

"I asked Doane if he knew you there. Apparently not."

"No, he didn't." Deacon paused as though deliberating. Suddenly he spoke. "I knew of him, though. You see, my father works in the bank of which Mr. Doane is president."

"Oh!" Rollins blinked. "I see."

Deacon stepped forward, placing his hand upon the captain's arm.

"I don't know why I told you that. It isn't important at all. Don't say anything to Doane, will you? Not that I care. It—it just isn't important."

"No. I get you, Jim. It isn't important." He flung an arm over the young man's shoulder. "Let's go back to dinner. That rotten time-row has given me an appetite."

There was that quiet in the Baliol dining room that evening which one might expect to find after an unsatisfactory time-trial. Nations might be falling, cities burning, important men dying; to these boys such events would be as nothing in the face of the fact that the crew of a traditional rival was to be met within the week—and that they were not proving themselves equipped for the meeting.

"If any of you fellows wish to motor down to the Groton Hotel on the Point for an hour or two, you may go," said the coach, pushing back his chair. He had begun to fear that his charges might be coming to too fine a point of condition and had decided that the relaxation of a bit of dancing might do no harm.

"Yeea!" In an instant that subdued dining apartment was tumultuous with vocal outcry, drawing to the doorway a crowd of curious freshmen who were finishing dinner in their room.

"All right!" Dr. Nicholls grinned. "I gather all you varsity and second varsity men want to go. I'll have the big launch ready at eight. And—oh, Dick Rollins, don't forget; that boat leaves the hotel dock at ten-forty-five precisely."

"Got you sir. Come on, fellows. Look out, you freshmen." With a yell and a dive the oarsmen went through the doors.

Deacon followed at a more leisurely gait with that faint gleam of amusement in his eyes which was so characteristic. His first impulse was not to go, but upon second thought he decided that he would. Jane Bostwick was stopping at the Groton. Her father was a successful promoter and very close to Cephas Doane, Sr., whose bank stood back of most of his operations. Deacon had known her rather well in the days when her father was not a successful promoter. In fact, the two had been neighbours as boy and girl, had played together in front of a row of prim brick houses. He had not seen her in recent years until the previous afternoon, when as he was walking along the country road, she had pulled up in her roadster.

"Don't pretend you don't remember me, Jim Deacon," she had laughed as the boy had stared at the stunning young woman.

Jim remembered her, all right. They talked as though so many significant years had not elapsed. She was greatly interested, exceedingly gracious.

"Do you know," she said, "it never occurred to me that Deacon, the Baliol rowing man, was none other than Jim Deacon. Silly of me, wasn't it? But then I didn't even know you were in Baliol. I'm perfectly crazy about the crew, you know. And Mother, I think, is a worse fan than I am. You know Junior Doane, of course."

"Oh, yes—that is, I—why, yes, I know him."

"Yes." She smiled down upon him. "If you're ever down to the Groton, do drop in. Mother would love to see you. She often speaks of your mother." With a wave of her hand she had sped on her way.

Curiously, that evening he had heard Doane talking to her over the telephone, and there was a great

deal in his manner of speaking that indicated something more than mere acquaintance.

But Deacon did not see Jane Bostwick at the hotel—not to speak to, at least. He was not a good dancer and held aloof when those of his fellows who were not acquainted with guests were introduced around. Finding a wicker settee among some palms at one side of the orchestra, Deacon sat drinking in the scene.

It was not until the hour set for the return had almost arrived that Deacon saw Jane Bostwick, and then his attention was directed to her by her appearance with Junior Doane in one of the open French windows at his right. Evidently the two had spent the evening in the sequestered darkness of the veranda. No pair in the room filled the eye so gratefully; the girl, tall, blonde, striking in a pale blue evening gown; the man, broad-shouldered, trim-waisted, with the handsome high-held head of a patrician.

A wave of something akin to bitterness passed over Deacon—bitterness having nothing to do with self. For the boy was ruggedly independent. He believed in himself; knew what he was going to do in the world. He was thinking of his father, and of the fathers of that young man and girl before him. His father was painstaking, honourable, considerate—a nobleman every inch of him; a man who deserved everything that the world had to give, a man who had everything save the quality of acquisition. And Doane's father? And Jane Bostwick's father?

Of the elder Doane he knew by hearsay—a proud, intolerant wholly worldly man whose passions, aside from finance, were his son and Baliol aquatics. And Jane Bostwick's father he had known as a boy—a

soft-footed, sly-faced velvety sort of a man noted for converting back lots into oil-fields and ash-dumps into mines yielding precious metals. Jim Deacon was not so old that he had come to philosophy concerning the way of the world.

But so far as his immediate world was concerned, Junior Doane was going out of the varsity boat in the morning—and he, Jim Deacon, was going to sit in his place.

It came the next morning. When the oarsmen went down to the boathouse to dress for their morning row, the arrangement of the various crews posted on the bulletin-board gave Deacon the seat at stroke in the varsity boat; Junior Doane's name appeared at stroke in the second varsity list.

There had been rumours of some sort of a shift, but no one seemed to have considered the probability of Doane's losing his seat—Doane least of all. For a moment the boy stood rigid, looking up at the bulletin-board. Then suddenly he laughed.

"All right, Garry," he said, turning to the captain of the second varsity. "Come on; we'll show 'em what a rudder looks like."

But it was not to be. In three consecutive dashes of a mile each, the varsity boat moved with such speed as it had not shown all season. There was life in the boat. Deacon, rowing in perfect form, passed the stroke up forward with a kick and a bite, handling his oar with a precision that made the eye of the coach glisten. And when the nervous little coxswain called for a rousing ten strokes, the shell seemed fairly to lift out of the water.

In the last mile dash Dr. Nicholls surreptitiously took his stop-watch from his pocket and timed the sprint. When he replaced the timepiece, the lines

of care which had seamed his face for the past few days vanished.

"All right, boys. Paddle in. Day after to-morrow we'll hold the final time-trial. Deacon, be careful; occasionally you clip your stroke at the finish."

But Deacon didn't mind the admonition. He knew the coach's policy of not letting a man think he was too good.

"You certainly bucked up that crew to-day, Deacon." Jim Deacon, who had been lying at full length on the turf at the top of the bluff watching the shadows creep over the purpling waters of the river, looked up to see Doane standing over him. His first emotion was one of triumph. Doane, the son of Cephas Doane, his father's employer, had definitely noticed him at last. Then the dominant emotion came—one of sympathy.

"Well, the second crew moved better too."

"Oh, I worked like a dog." Doane laughed. "Of course you know I'm going to get my place back, if I can."

"Of course." Deacon plucked a blade of grass and placed it in his mouth. There was rather a constrained silence for a moment.

"I didn't know you came from my city, Deacon. I—Jane Bostwick told me about you last night."

"I see. I used to know her." Inwardly Deacon cursed his natural inability to converse easily, partly fearing that Doane would mistake his reticence for embarrassment in his presence, or on the other hand set him down as churlish and ill bred.

For his part Doane seemed a bit ill at ease.

"I didn't know, of course, anything Jane told me. If I had, of course, I'd have looked you up more at the college."

"We're both busy there in our different ways."

Doane stood awkwardly for a moment and then walked away, not knowing that however he may have felt about the conversation, he had at least increased his stature in the mind of Jim Deacon.

Next day on the river Junior Doane's desperation at the outset brought upon his head the criticism of the coach.

"Doane! Doane! You're rushing your slide. Finish out your stroke, for heaven's sake."

Deacon watching the oarsman's face, saw it grow rigid, saw his mouth set. Well he knew the little tragedy through which Doane was living.

Doane did better after that. The second boat gave the varsity some sharp brushes while the coxswains barked and the coach shouted staccato objurgation and comment through his megaphone, and the rival oarsmen swung backward and forward in the expenditure of ultimate power and drive.

But Jim Deacon was the man for varsity stroke. There was not the least doubt about that. The coach could see it; the varsity could feel it; but of them all Deacon alone knew why. He knew that Doane was practically as strong an oar as he was, certainly as finished. And Doane's experience was greater. The difficulty as Deacon grasped it was that the boy had not employed all the material of his experience. The coxswain, Seagraves, was a snappy little chap, with an excellent opinion of his head. But Deacon had doubts as to his racing sense. He could shoot ginger into his men, could lash them along with a fine rhythm, but in negotiating a hard-fought race he had his shortcomings. At least so Deacon had decided in the brushes against the varsity shell when he was stroking the second varsity.

Deacon thanked no coxswain to tell him how to row a race, when to sprint, when to dog along at a steady, swinging thirty; nor did he require advice on the pacing and general condition of a rival crew. As he swung forward for the catch, his practice was to turn his head slightly to one side, chin along the shoulder, thus gaining through the tail of his eye a glimpse of any boat that happened to be abeam, slightly ahead or slightly astern. This glance told him everything he wished to know. The coach did not know the reason for this peculiarity in Deacon's style, but since it did not affect his rowing, he very wisely said nothing. To his mind the varsity boat had at last begun to arrive, and this was no time for minor points.

Two days before the Shelburne race the Baliol varsity in its final time-trial came within ten seconds of equalling the lowest downstream trial-record ever established—a record made by a Shelburne eight of the early eighties. There was no doubt in the mind of any one about the Baliol crew quarters that Deacon would be the man to set the pace for his university in the supreme test swiftly approaching.

News of Baliol's improved form began to be disseminated in the daily press by qualified observers of rowing form who were beginning to flock to the scene of the regatta from New York, Philadelphia, and various New England cities. Dr. Nicholls was reticent, but no one could say that his demeanour was marked by gloom. Perhaps his optimism would have been more marked had the information he possessed concerning Shelburne been less disturbing. As a fact there was every indication that the rival university would be represented by one of the best crews in her history—which was to say a very great

deal. In truth, Baliol rowing enthusiasts had not seen their shell cross the line ahead of a Shelburne varsity boat in three consecutive years, a depressing state of affairs which in the present season had filled every Baliol rowing man with grim determination and the graduates with alternate hope and despair.

"Jim," said the coach, drawing Deacon from the float upon which he had been standing, watching the antics of a crew of former Baliol oarsmen who had come from far and wide to row the mile race of "Gentlemen's Eights" which annually marked the afternoon preceding the classic regatta day, "Jim, you're not worried at all, are you? You're such a quiet sort of a chap, I can't seem to get you."

Deacon smiled faintly.

"No, I'm not worried—not a bit, sir. I mean I'm going to do my best, and if that's good enough, why—well, we win."

"I want you to do more than your best to-morrow, Jim. It's got to be a super-effort. You're up against a great Shelburne crew, the greatest I ever saw—that means twelve years back. I wouldn't talk to every man this way, but I think you're a stroke who can stand responsibility. I think you're a man who can work the better when he knows the size of his job. It's a big one, boy—the biggest I've ever tackled."

"Yes, sir."

The coach studied him a minute.

"How do you feel about beating Shelburne? What I mean," he went on as the oarsman regarded him, puzzled, "is, would it break your heart to lose? Is the thought of being beaten so serious that you can't—that you won't consider it?"

"No sir, I won't consider it. I don't go into any-

thing without wanting to come out ahead. I've worked three years to get into the varsity. I realize the position you've given me will help me, make me stand out after graduation, mean almost as much as my diploma—provided we can win."

"What about Baliol? Do you think of the college, too, and what a victory will mean to her? What defeat will mean?"

"Oh," Deacon shrugged; "of course," he went on a bit carelessly, "we want to see Baliol on top as often——" He stopped, then broke into a chuckle as the stroke of the gentlemen's eight suddenly produced from the folds of his sweater a bottle from which he drank with dramatic unction while his fellow-oarsmen clamoured to share the libation and the coxswain abused them all roundly.

The eyes of the coach never left the young man's face. But he said nothing while Deacon took his fill of enjoyment of the jovial scene, apparently forgetting the sentence which he had broken in the middle.

But that evening something of the coach's meaning came to Deacon as he sat on a rustic bench watching the colours fade from one of those sunset skies which live ever in the hearts of rowing men who have ever spent a hallowed June on the heights of that broad placid stream. The Baliol graduates had lost their race against the gentlemen of Shelburne, having rowed just a bit worse than their rivals. And now the two crews were celebrating their revival of the ways of youth with a dinner provided by the defeated eight. Their laughter and their songs went out through the twilight and were lost in the recesses of the river. One song with a haunting melody caught Deacon's attention; he listened to get the words.

Then raise the rosy goblet high,
The senior's chalice and belie
The tongues that trouble and defile,
For we have yet a little while
To linger, you and youth and I,
In college days.

A group of oarsmen down on the lawn caught up the song and sent it winging through the twilight, soberly, impressively, with ever-surging harmony. College days! For a moment a dim light burned in the back of his mind. It went out suddenly. Jim Deacon shrugged and thought of the morrow's race.

It was good to know he was going to be a part of it. He could feel the gathering of enthusiasm, exhilaration in the atmosphere—pent-up emotion which on the morrow would burst like a thunder-clap. In the quaint city five miles down the river hotels were filling with the vanguard of the boat-race throng—boys fresh from the poetry of Commencement; their older brothers, their fathers, their grandfathers, living again the thrill of youth and the things thereof. And mothers and sisters and sweethearts! Deacon's nerves tingled pleasantly in response to the glamour of the hour.

"Oh, Jim Deacon!"

"Hello!" Deacon turned his face toward the building whence the voice came.

"Somebody wants to see you on the road by the bridge over the railroad."

"See me? All right."

Filled with wonder, Deacon walked leisurely out of the yard and then reaching the road, followed in the wake of an urchin of the neighbourhood who had brought the summons, and could tell Deacon only that it was some one in an automobile.

It was, in fact, Jane Bostwick.

"Jump up here in the car, won't you, Jim?" Her voice was somewhat tense. "No, I'm not going to drive," she added as Deacon hesitated. "We can talk better."

"Have you heard from your father lately?" she asked as the young man sprang into the seat at her side.

He started.

"No, not in a week. Why, is there anything the matter with him?"

"Of course not." She touched him lightly upon the arm. "You knew that Mr. Bell, cashier of the National Penn Bank, had died?"

"No. Is that so! That's too bad." Then suddenly Deacon sat erect. "By George! Father is one of the assistant cashiers there. I wonder if he'll be promoted." He turned upon the girl. "Is that what you wanted to tell me?"

She waited a bit before replying.

"No—not exactly that."

"Not exactly—— What do you mean?"

"Do you know how keen Mr. Doane, I mean Junior's father is on rowing? Well,"—as Deacon nodded,—“have you thought how he might feel toward the father of the man who is going to sit in his son's seat in the race to-morrow? Would it make him keen to put that father in Mr. Bell's place?"

Deacon's exclamation was sharp.

"Who asked you to put that thought in my mind?"

"Ah!" Her hand went out, lying upon his arm. "I was afraid you were going to take it that way. Mother was talking this afternoon. I thought you should know. As for Junior Doane, I'm frank to ad-

mit I'm awfully keen about him. But that isn't why I came here. I remember how close you and your father used to be. I—I thought perhaps you'd thank me, if—if——"

"What you mean is that because I have beaten Doane out for stroke, his father may be sore and not promote my father at the bank."

"There's no 'may' about it. Mr. Doane will be sore. He'll be sore at Junior, of course. But he'll be sore secretly at you, and where there is a question of choice of cashier between *your* father and another man—even though the other man has not been so long in the bank—how do you think his mind will work; I mean, if you lose? Of course, if you can win, then I am sure everything will be all right. You must——"

"If I can win! What difference would that——" He stopped suddenly. "I've caught what you mean." He laughed bitterly. "Parental jealousy. All right! All right!"

"Jim, I don't want you——"

"Don't bother. I've heard all I can stand, Jane. Thank you." He lurched out of the car and hurried away.

She called him. No answer. Waiting a moment, the girl sighed, touched the self-starter and drove away.

Deacon had no idea of any lapse of time between the departure of the car and himself in his cot prepared for sleep—with, however, no idea that sleep would come. His mood was pitiable. His mind was a mass of whirling thoughts in the midst of which he could recognize pictures of his boyhood, a little boy doing many things—with a hand always tucked within the fingers of a great big man who knew

everything, who could do everything, who could always explain all the mysteries of the big, strange, booming world. There were many such pictures, pictures not only relating to boyhood, but to his own struggle at Baliol, to the placid little home in Philadelphia and all that it had meant, all that it still meant, to his father, to his mother, to him. Any act of his that would bring sorrow or dismay or the burden of defeated hope to that home!

But on the other hand, the morrow was to bring him the crown of toilsome years, was to make his name one to conjure with wherever Baliol was loved or known. He knew what the varsity *cachet* would do for his prospects in the world. And after all, he had his own life to live, had he not? Would not the selfish, or rather the rigorous, settlement of this problem, be for the best in the end, since his making good would simply be making good for his father and his mother? But how about his father's chance for making good on his own account?

A comrade in the cot adjoining heard a groan.

"Eh! Are you sick, Deacon? Are you all right?"

"Sure—dreaming," came the muffled reply.

There was something unreal to Deacon about the morning. The sunlight was filled with sinister glow; the voices of the rowing men were strange; the whole environment seemed to have changed. It was difficult for Jim Deacon to look upon the bronzed faces of the fellows about the breakfast table, upon the coach with his stiff moustache and glittering eye-glasses—difficult to look upon them and realize that within a few hours his name would be anathema to them, that forever where loyal men of Baliol gather he would be an outcast, a pariah.

That was what he would be—an outcast. For he had come to his decision: Just what he would do he did not know. He did know that he would not stroke the Baliol varsity. Out of all the welter of thought and travail had been resolved one dominant idea. His father came first: there was no evading it. With all the consequences that would follow the execution of his decision he was familiar. He had come now to know what Baliol meant to him as a place not only of education, but a place to be loved, honoured, revered. He knew what his future might be. But—his father came first. Arising from the breakfast-table, he spoke to but one man, Junior Doane.

“Doane,” he said, drawing him to one side, “you will row at stroke this afternoon.”

The man stared at him. “Are you crazy, Deacon?”

“Not, not crazy. I’m not feeling well; that’s all.”

“But look here, Deacon—you want to see the coach. You’re off your head or something. Wait here, just a minute.” As Doane hurried away in search of Dr. Nicholls, Deacon turned blindly through the yard and so out to the main road leading to a picturesque little river city about nine miles up the stream.

June was at her loveliest in this lovable country with its walled fields, its serene uplands and glowing pastures, its lush river meadows and wayside flowers. But of all this Deacon marked nothing as with head down he tramped along with swift, dogged stride. Up the river three or four miles farther on was the little city of which he had so often heard but never seen, the little city of Norton, so like certain English river-cities according to a veteran Oxford oarsman who had visited the Baliol quarters the previous season. Deacon had an interest in strange places; he

had an eye for the picturesque and the colourful. He would wander about the place, filling his mind with impressions. He had always wanted to go to Norton; it had seemed like a dream city to him.

He was in fact striding along in the middle of the road when the horn of a motorcar coming close behind startled him. As he turned, the vehicle sped up to his side and then stopped with a grinding of brakes.

Dr. Nicholls, the coach, rose to his full height in the roadster and glared down at Deacon, while Junior Doane, who had been driving, stared fixedly over the wheel. The coach's voice was merely a series of profane roars. He had ample lungs, and the things he said seemed to echo far and wide. His stentorian anger afforded so material a contrast to the placid environment that Deacon stood dazed under the vocal avalanche, hearing but a blur of objurgation.

"Eh?" He paused as Junior Doane placed an admonishing hand upon his arm.

"I beg your pardon, Doctor; but I don't think that is the right way. May I say something to Deacon?"

The coach, out of breath, nodded and gestured, sinking into his seat.

"Look here, Jim Deacon, we've come to take you back. You can't buck out the race this way, you know. It isn't done. Now, wait a minute!" he cried sharply as the boy in the road made to speak. "I know why you ran away. Jane Bostwick called me up and told me everything. She hadn't realized quite what she was doing——"

"She—she bungled everything."

"Bungled! What do you mean, Dr. Nicholls?"

"Nothing—nothing! You young idiot, don't you

realize you're trying to kill yourself for life? Jump into the car."

"I'm not going to row." Deacon's eyes smoldered upon the two.

Studying him a moment, Dr. Nicholls suddenly grasped the seriousness of Deacon's mood. He leaped from the car and walked up to him, placing a hand upon his shoulder.

"Look here, my boy: You've let a false ideal run away with you. Do you realize that some twenty-five thousand people throughout this country are having their interests tossed away by you? You represent them. They didn't ask you to. You came out for the crew and worked until you won a place for yourself, a place no one but you can fill. There are men, there are families on this riverside to-day, who have traveled from San Francisco, from all parts of the country, to see Baliol at her best. There are thousands who have the right to ask us that Shelburne is not permitted to win this afternoon. Do you realize your respons——"

Deacon raised his hand.

"I've heard it said often, Dr. Nicholls, that any one who gets in Cephas Doane's way gets crushed. I'm not afraid of him, nor of any one else, on my own account; but I'm afraid of him because of my father. My father is getting to be an old man. Do you think I am going to do anyth——" Deacon's voice, which had been gathering in intensity, broke suddenly. He couldn't go on.

"Jim Deacon!" There was a note of exhilaration in Junior Doane's voice. He hastily climbed out of the car and joined the coach at Deacon's side. "I'm not going to defend my father now. No one knows him as I do; no one knows as I do the great big

stuff that is in him. He and I have always been close and——”

“Then you know how he’d feel about any one who took your place in the boat. He can’t hurt me. But he can break my father’s heart——”

“Deacon, is that the opinion you have of my father!”

“Tell me the truth, Doane; is there the chance under the conditions that with a choice between two men in the bank he might fail to see Father? Isn’t it human nature for a man as dominant and strong as he is, who has always had or got most of the things he wants, to feel that way?”

“Perhaps. But not if you can win out against Shelburne. Can’t you see your chance, Deacon? Go in and beat Shelburne; Father’ll be so glad he’ll fall off the observation-train. You know how he hates Shelburne. Any soreness he has about my missing out at stroke will be directed at me—and it won’t be soreness, merely regret. Don’t you get it?”

“And if we lose——”

“If we lose, there’s the chance that we’re all in the soup.”

“I’m not, if I keep out of this thing——”

“If we lose with *me* at stroke, do you suppose it will help you or any one related to you with my father when he learns that Baliol *would probably have won with you stroking?*

“My Lord, Jim Deacon,” Doane went on as the other did not reply, “do you suppose this is any fun for me, arguing with you to swing an oar this afternoon when I would give my heart’s blood to swing it in your place?”

“Why do you do it, then?”

“Why do I do it? Because I love Baliol. Be-

cause her interests stand above mine. Because more than anything I want to see her win. I didn't feel this way when you beat me out for stroke. I'll admit it. I didn't show my feelings, but I was thinking of nothing but my licking——"

"Ah!"

"Just a minute, Jim. I didn't realize the bigness of the thing, didn't appreciate that what I wanted to do didn't count for a damn. Baliol, only Baliol! It all came to me when you bucked out. Baliol is all that counts, Jim. If I can help her win by rooting from the observation-car, all right! But—don't think it's any fun for me urging you to come back and row. For I wanted to row this race, old boy. I—I——" Doane's voice faltered. "But I can't; that's all. Baliol needs a better man—needs you. As for you, you've no right to consider anything else. You go in—and win."

"Win!" Jim Deacon stood in the road, rigid, his voice falling to a whisper. "Win!" Into his eyes came a vacant expression. For a moment the group stood in the middle of the road as though transfixed. Then the coach placed his hand upon Deacon's arm, gently.

"Come Jim," he said.

The afternoon had gone silently on. Jim Deacon sat on the veranda of the crew-quarters, his eyes fixed upon the river. Some of the crew were trying to read; others lounged about talking in low voices. Occasionally the referee's launch would appear off the float, the official exchanging some words with the coach while the oarsmen watched eagerly. Then the launch would turn and disappear.

"Too rough yet, boys. They're going to postpone another hour." Twice had the coach brought this

word to the group of pent-up young men who in a manner of speaking were sharing the emotions of the condemned awaiting the executioner's summons. Would the up-river breeze never subside and give them conditions that would be satisfactory to the meticulous referee?

Deacon lurched heavily in his seat.

"What difference does it make so long as the shells won't sink?" he asked.

"We're ready," replied Dick Rollins. "It's Shelburne holding things up; she wants smooth water, of course. It suits me, though. Things will soften up by sunset."

"Sunset!" Deacon scowled at the western skies. "Well, sunset isn't so far off as it was."

Word came, as a matter of fact, shortly after five o'clock. The coach, with solemn face, came up to the cottage, bringing the summons. After that for a little while Jim Deacon passed through a series of vague impressions rather than living experience. There was the swift changing of clothes in the cavernous boathouse, the bearing of the boat high overhead to the edge of the float, the splash as it was lowered into the water. Mechanically he leaned forward to lace the stretcher-shoes, letting the handle of his oar rest against his stomach; mechanically he tried to slide, tested the oarlock. Then some one gripped the blade of his oar, pushing gently outward. The shell floated gingerly out into the stream.

"Starboard oars, paddle." Responsive to the coxswain's sharp command Deacon plied his blade, and in the act there came to him clarity of perception. He was out here to win, to win not only for Baliol, but for himself, for his father. There could be no

thought of not winning; the imminence of the supreme test had served to fill him with the consciousness of indomitable strength, to thrill his muscles with the call for tremendous action.

As the shell swept around a point of land, a volume of sound rolled across the waters. Out of the corner of his eye he caught view of the long observation-train, vibrant with animation, the rival colours commingled so that all emblem of collegiate affiliation was lost in a merger of quivering hue. A hill near the starting-line on the other side of the river was black with spectators, who indeed filled points of vantage all down the four miles of the course. The clouds above the western hills were turning crimson; the waters had deepened to purple and were still and silent.

"There, you hell-dogs!" The voice of the coxswain rasped in its combativeness. "Out there is Shelburne; ahead of us at the line. Who says it'll be the last time she'll be ahead of us?"

Along the beautiful line of brown, swinging bodies went a low growl, a more vicious rattle of the oarlocks.

Suddenly as Jim Deacon swung forward, a moored skiff swept past his blade, the starting-line.

"Weigh all." The coxswain's command was immediately followed by others designed to work the boat back to proper starting-position. Deacon could easily see the Shelburne crew now—big men all, ideal oarsmen to look at. Their faces were set and grim, their eyes straight ahead. So far as they gave indication, their shell might have been alone on the river. Now the Baliol shell had made sternway sufficient for the man in the skiff to seize the rudder. The Shelburne boat was already secured. Astern

hovered the referee's boat, the official standing in the bow directing operations. Still astern was a larger craft filled with favoured representatives of the two colleges, the rival coaches, the crew-managers and the like.

"Are you all ready, Baliol?"

"Yes, sir." Deacon, leaning forward, felt his arms grow tense.

"Are you all ready, Shelburne?"

The affirmative was followed by the sharp report of a pistol. With a snap of his wrist Deacon beveled his oar, which bit cleanly into the water and pulled. There followed an interval of hectic stroking, oars in and out of the water as fast as could be done, while spray rose in clouds and the coxswain screamed the measure of the beat.

"Fine, Baliol." The coxswain's voice went past Deacon's ear like a bullet. "Both away together and now a little ahead at forty-two to the minute. But down now. Down—down—down—down! That's it—thirty-two to the minute. It's a long race, remember. Shelburne's dropping the beat, too. You listen to Papa, all of you; he'll keep you wise. Number three, for God's sake don't lift all the water in the river up on your blade at the finish. Shelburne's hitting it up a bit. Make it thirty-four."

"Not yet." Deacon scowled at the tense little coxswain. "I'll do the timing." Chick Seagraves nodded.

"Right. Thirty-two."

Swinging forward to the catch, his chin turned against his shoulder, Deacon studied the rival crew which with the half-mile flags flashing by had attained a lead of some ten feet. Their blades were biting the water hardly fifty feet from the end of

his blade, the naked brown bodies moving back and forth in perfect rhythm and with undeniable power registered in the snap of the legs on the stretchers and the pull of the arms. Deacon's eyes swept the face of the Shelburne coxswain; it was composed. He glanced at the stroke. The work, apparently, was costing him nothing.

"They're up to thirty-four," cried Seagraves as the mile flags drew swiftly up.

"They're jockeying us, Chick. We'll show our fire when we get ready. Let 'em rave."

Vaguely there came to Deacon a sound from the river-bank—Shelburne enthusiasts acclaiming a lead of a neat half a length.

"Too much—too much." Deacon shook his head. Either Shelburne was setting out to row her rival down at the start, or else, as Deacon suspected, she was trying to smoke Baliol out, to learn at an early juncture just what mettle was in the rival boat. A game, stout-hearted, confident crew will always do this, it being the part of good racing policy to make a rival know fear as early as possible. And Shelburne believed in herself, beyond any question of doubt.

And whether she was faking, or since Baliol could not afford to let the bid go unanswered, a lead of a quarter of a length at the mile had to be challenged:

"Give 'em ten at thirty-six!" Deacon's voice was thick with gathering effort. "Talk it up, Chick."

From the coxswain's throat issued a machine-gun fusillade of whiplash words.

"Ten, boys! A rouser now. Ten! Come on. One—two—three—four—oh, boy! Are we walking! Five—six—are they anchored over there? Seven—oh, you big brown babies! Eight—Shelburne, good night—nine—wow!—ten!"

Deacon, driving backward and forward with fiery intensity, feeling within him the strength of some huge propulsive machine, was getting his first real thrill of conflict—the thrill not only of actual competition, but of all it meant to him, personally: his father's well-being, his own career—everything was merged in a luminous background of emotion for which that glittering oar he held was the outlet.

Shelburne had met the spurt, but the drive of the Baliol boat was not to be denied. Gradually the two prows came abreast, and then Deacon, not stopping at the call of ten, but fairly carrying the crew along with him, swung on with undiminished ferocity, while Seagraves' voice rose into a shrill crescendo of triumph as Baliol forged to the lead.

"They know a little now." Deacon's voice was a growl as gradually he reduced the beat to thirty-two, Shelburne already having diminished the stroke.

Deacon studied them. They were rowing along steadily, the eyes of their coxswain turned curiously upon the Baliol shell. He suspected the little man would like nothing better than to have Baliol break her back to the two-mile mark and thus dig a watery grave. He suspected also, that, failing Baliol's willingness to do this, the test would now be forced upon her. For Shelburne was a heavy crew with all sorts of staying power. What Deacon had to keep in mind was that his eight was not so rugged and had therefore to be nursed along, conserving energy wherever possible.

It was in the third mile that the battle of wits and judgment had to be carried to conclusion, the fourth mile lurking as a mere matter of staying power and ability to stand the gaff. Deacon's idea

was that at present his crew was leading because Shelburne was not unwilling for the present that this should be. How true this was became evident after the two-mile flags had passed, when the Shelburne oarsmen began to lay to their strokes with tremendous drive, the boat creeping foot by foot upon the rival shell until the Baliol lead had been overcome and Shelburne herself swept to the fore.

Deacon raised the stroke slightly, to thirty-three, but soon dropped to thirty-two, watching Shelburne carefully lest she make a runaway then and there. Baliol was half a length astern at the two-and-a-half mile mark, passing which the Shelburne crew gave themselves up to a tremendous effort to kill off her rival then and there.

"Jim! They're doing thirty-six—walking away."

The coxswain's face was white and drawn.

But Deacon continued to pass up a thirty-two stroke while the Shelburne boat slid gradually away until at the three-mile mark there was a foot of clear water between its rudder and the prow of the Baliol shell.

Deacon glanced at the coxswain. A mile to go—one deadly mile.

"Thirty-six," he said. "Shelburne's can't have much more left."

The time had passed for study now. Gritting his teeth, Deacon bent to his work, his eyes fixed upon the swaying body of the coxswain, whose sharp staccato voice snapped out the measure; the beat of the oars in the locks came as one sound.

"Right, boys! Up we come. Bully—bully—bully! Half a length now. Do you hear? Half a length! Give me a quarter, boys. Eh, Godfrey! We've got it. Now up and at 'em, Baliol. Oh, you hell-dogs!"

As in a dream Deacon saw the Shelburne boat drift into view, saw the various oarsmen slide past until he and the rival stroke were rowing practically abeam.

"That's for you, Dad," he muttered—and smiled.

He saw the men swing with quickened rhythm, saw the spray fly like bullets from the Shelburne blades.

"Look out." There was a note of anguish in Seagraves' voice. "Shelburne's spurting again."

A malediction trembled upon Deacon's lips. So here was the joker held in reserve by the rival crew! Had Baliol anything left? Had he anything left? Grave doubt was mounting in his soul. Away swept the Shelburne boat inches at a stroke until the difference in their positions was nearly a length. Three miles and a half! Not an observer but believed that this gruelling contest had been worked out. Seagraves, his eyes running tears, believed it as he swung backward and forward exhorting his men. Half a mile more! The crews were now rowing between the anchored lines of yachts and excursion-craft. The finish boat was in sight.

And now Deacon, exalted by something nameless, uttered a cry and began to give to Baliol more than he really had. Surely, steadily, he raised his stroke while his comrades, like the lion-hearts they were, took it up and put the sanction of common authority upon it. Thirty-four! Thirty-six! Not the spurt of physical prowess, but of indomitable mentality.

"Up we come!" Seagraves' voice was shrill like a bugle. He could see expressions of stark fear in the faces of the rival oarsmen. They had given all they had to give, had given enough to win almost any race. But here in this race they had not given enough.

On came the Baliol shell with terrific impulse.

Quarter of a mile; Shelburne passed, her prow hanging doggedly on to the Baliol rudder.

Victory! Deacon's head became clear. None of the physical torture he had felt in the past mile was now registered upon his consciousness. No thought but that of impending victory!

"Less than a quarter of a mile, boys. In the stretch. Now—my God!"

Following the coxswain's broken exclamation, Deacon felt an increased resistance upon his blade.

"Eh?"

"Innis has carried away his oarlock." The eyes of the coxswain strained upon Deacon's face.

Deacon gulped. Strangely a picture of his father filled his mind. His face hardened.

"All right! Tell him to throw his oar away and swing with the rest. Don't move your rudder now. Keep it straight as long as you can."

From astern the sharp eyes of the Shelburne cox had detected the accident to Baliol's Number Six. His voice was chattering stridently.

Deacon, now doing the work practically of two men, was undergoing torture which shortly would have one of two effects. Either he would collapse or his spirit would carry him beyond the claims of overtaxed physique. One stroke, two strokes, three strokes—a groan escaped his lips. Then so far as personality, personal emotions, personal feelings were concerned, Jim Deacon ceased to function. He became merely part of the mechanism of a great effort, the principal guiding part.

And of all those rowing men of Baliol only the coxswain saw the Shelburne boat creeping up slowly, inexorably—eight men against seven. For nearly a quarter of a mile the grim fight was waged.

"Ten strokes more, boys!"

The prow of the Shelburne shell was on a line with Baliol's Number Two.

"One—two—three—four——" The bow of the Shelburne boat plunged up abeam Baliol's bow oar.

"Five—six—God, boys!—seven——"

The voice of the coxswain swept upward in a shrill scream. A gun boomed; the air rocked with the screech and roar of whistles.

Slowly Deacon opened his eyes. Seagraves, the coxswain, was standing up waving his megaphone. Rollins, at Number Seven, lay prone over his oar. Innis, who had broken his oarlock, sat erect; Wallace, at Number Five, was down. So was the bow oar. Mechanically Deacon's hand sought the water, splashing the body of the man in front of him. Then suddenly a mahogany launch dashed alongside. In the bow was a large man with white moustache and florid face and burning black eyes. His lips were drawn in a broad grin which seemed an anomaly upon the face of Cephas Doane. If so he immediately presented a still greater anomaly. He laughed aloud.

"Poor old Shelburne! I—George! The first in four years! I never saw anything quite like that. We've talked of Baliol's rowing-spirit—eh! Here, you Deacon, let me give you a hand out of the shell. We'll run you back to quarters."

Deacon, wondering, was pulled to the launch and then suddenly stepped back, his jaw falling, his eyes alight as a man advanced from the stern.

"Dad!"

"Yes," chuckled Doane. "We came up together—to celebrate."

"You mean—you mean——" Jim Deacon's voice faltered.

"Yes, I mean——" Cephas Doane stopped suddenly. "I think in justice to my daughter-in-law to be, Jane Bostwick, that some explanation is in order."

"Yes, sir." Deacon, his arm about his father's shoulder, stared at the man.

"You see, Dr. Nicholls had the idea that you needed a finer edge put on your rowing spirit. So I got Jane to cook up the story about that cashier business at the bank."

"You did!"

"Yes. Of course your father was appointed. The only trouble was that Jane, bright and clever as she is, bungled her lines."

"Bungled!" Deacon's face cleared. "That's what Dr. Nicholls said about her on the road, the day I bucked out. I remember the word somehow."

"She bungled, yes. She was to have made it very clear that by winning you would escape my alleged wrath—or rather, your father would. I knew you would row hard for Baliol, but I thought you might row superhumanly for your father."

"Well," Jim Deacon flushed, then glanced proudly at his father—"you were right, sir—I would."

QUESTIONS

1. Where does this story actually take place? Baliol and Shelburne actually represent what two colleges?
2. What preparation has Lawrence Perry had for writing this story?
3. How did Jim Deacon win his seat in the varsity boat?
4. In what ways does Deacon differ from your conception of a typical college athlete?
5. Where does the first complication arise? How are the fathers of Deacon and Doane involved in the situation?

6. Do you consider Doane's attitude snobbish?
7. For what reason is the coach not satisfied with Deacon's rowing?
8. To what strategy does the coach now resort to arouse Deacon to greater effort?
9. What is to be Jane Bostwick's part in aiding the coach?
10. How great is her success?
11. Describe Deacon's state of mind following his interview with Jane.
12. What is the "Matter of Loyalty" which is involved?
13. How is Deacon finally persuaded to resume his place in the boat?
14. Describe the race.
15. What is the anti-climax?
16. Who do you think has got more out of his college career, Deacon or Doane?
17. Discuss the probability of seven men holding the lead of a boat-length against eight men, for a quarter of a mile.
18. Write a theme describing the conclusion of this story had Baliol lost the race. How would the defeat affect the principal characters?
19. Describe some other boat race you have seen or read about.

FOOTFALLS

BY

WILBUR DANIEL STEELE

WILBUR DANIEL STEELE

(1886-)

Perhaps every collegiate short-story course uses the stories of Wilbur Daniel Steele as examples of how short stories should be written. And Edward J. O'Brien, editor of "Best Short Stories" series since 1915, says of him, "Almost without exception they (his stories) represent the best that is being accomplished in America to-day by a literary artist. . . . Few writers show such economy in the use of their materials. . . . He has pursued a course of uncompromising fidelity to his literary ideals, publishing comparatively few stories, but maintaining a standard of imaginative reality which has slowly but surely developed into an art which bears all signs of permanence."

Wilbur Daniel Steele is forty-two years old. Although he was born in North Carolina, reared in Denver, and educated in the University of Denver, it is to New England and the sea that he turns for material for his stories. No Western element enters into any of his tales, in spite of the fact that he was a man grown when he first came to New England.

Mr. Steele lives with his wife and two small sons on the picturesque island of Nantucket, within sound of the sea of which he writes so well. He is fond of out-door life and enjoys tennis, golf, and sailing a boat. Five or six hours of the day, nearly every day in the year, he spends in writing at his desk.

Mr. Steele has studied art in New York and Paris, and spent two winters in Africa. "The Marriage of Kirwan" and "The Shame Dance" show how acutely he senses the atmosphere of the tropics.

The first story to bring him recognition was "White Horse Winter," and since that time he has turned out many stories, all excellent. Indeed, it is a rare prize collection that does not contain at least one story by this gifted author.

Some other short stories by Wilbur Daniel Steele:

Yellow Cat
White Horse Winter
Land's End
Down on Their Knees

Blue Murder
They Know Not What They Do
Woman at Seven Brothers
Out of Exile

FOOTFALLS

This is not an easy story; not a road for tender feet or for casual feet. Better the meadows. Let me warn you, it is as hard as that old man's soul and as sunless as his eyes. It has its inception in catastrophe, and its end in an almost incredible act of violence; between them it tells barely how one, long blind, can become also deaf and dumb.

He lived in one of those old Puritan sea towns where the strain has come down austere and moribund, so that his act would not be quite unbelievable. Except that the town is no longer Puritan and Yankee. It has been betrayed; it has become an outpost of the Portuguese islands.

This man, the blind cobbler himself, was Portuguese from St. Michael, in the Western Islands, and his name was Boaz Negro.

He was happy. An unquenchable exuberance lived in him. When he arose in the morning he made vast, as it were uncontrollable, gestures with his stout arms. He came into his shop singing. His voice, strong and deep as the chest from which it emanated, rolled out through the doorway and along the street, and the fishermen, done with their morning work and lounging and smoking along the wharves, said, "Boaz is to work already." Then they came up to sit in the shop.

In that town a cobbler's shop is a club. One sees the interior always dimly thronged. They sit on the benches watching the artisan at his work for hours, and they talk about everything in the world. A cobbler is known by the company he keeps.

Boaz Negro kept young company. He would have

nothing to do with the old. On his own head the gray hairs set thickly.

He had a grown son. But the benches in his shop were for the lusty and valiant young, men who could spend the night drinking, and then at three o'clock in the morning turn out in the rain and dark to pull at the weirs, sing songs, buffet one another among the slippery fish in the boat's bottom, and make loud jokes about the fundamental things, love and birth and death. Harkening to their boasts and strong prophecies his breast heaved and his heart beat faster. He was a large, full-blooded fellow, fashioned for exploits; the flame in his darkness burned higher even to hear of them.

It is scarcely conceivable how Boaz Negro could have come through this much of his life still possessed of that unquenchable and priceless exuberance; how he would sing in the dawn; how, simply listening to the recital of deeds in gale or brawl, he could easily forget himself, a blind man, tied to a shop and a last; easily make of himself a lusty young fellow breasting the sunlit and adventurous tide of life.

He had had a wife, whom he had loved. Fate, which had scourged him with the initial scourge of blindness, had seen fit to take his Angelina away. He had four sons. Three, one after another, had been removed, leaving only Manuel, the youngest. Recovering slowly, with agony, from each of these recurrent blows, his unquenchable exuberance had lived. And there was another thing quite as extraordinary. He had never done anything but work, and that sort of thing may kill the flame where an abrupt catastrophe fails. Work in the dark. Work, work, work! And accompanied by privation; an almost miserly scale of personal economy. Yes, indeed,

he had "skinned his fingers," especially in the earlier years. When it tells most.

How he had worked! Not alone in the daytime, but also sometimes, when orders were heavy, far into the night. It was strange for one, passing along that deserted street at midnight, to hear issuing from the black shop of Boaz Negro the rhythmical tap-tap-tap of hammer on wooden peg.

Nor was that sound all: no man in town could get far past that shop in his nocturnal wandering unobserved. No more than a dozen footfalls, and from the darkness Boaz's voice rolled forth, fraternal, stentorian, "Good-night, Antone!" "Good-night to you, Caleb Snow!"

To Boaz Negro it was still broad day.

Now, because of this, he was what might be called a substantial man. He owned his place, his shop, opening on the sidewalk, and behind it the dwelling-house with trellised galleries upstairs and down.

And there was always something for his son, a "piece for the pocket," a dollar-, five-, or even a ten-dollar bill if he had "got to have it." Manuel was a "good boy." Boaz not only said this; he felt that he was assured of it in his understanding, to the infinite peace of his heart.

It was curious that he should be ignorant only of the one nearest to him. Not because he was physically blind. Be certain he knew more of other men and of other men's sons than they or their neighbors did. More, that is to say, of their hearts and understandings, their idiosyncrasies, and their ultimate weight in the balance-pan of eternity.

His simple explanation of Manuel was that Manuel "wasn't too stout." To others he said this, and to himself. Manuel was not indeed too robust. How

should he be vigorous when he never did anything to make him so? He never worked. Why should he work, when existence was provided for, and when there was always that "piece for the pocket"? Even a ten-dollar bill on a Saturday night! No, Manuel "wasn't too stout."

In the shop they let it go at that. The missteps and frailties of everyone else in the world were canvassed there with the most shameless publicity. But Boaz Negro was a blind man, and in a sense their host. Those reckless, strong young fellows respected and loved him. It was allowed to stand at that. Manuel was "a good boy." Which did not prevent them, by the way, from joining later in the general condemnation of that father's laxity—"the ruination of the boy!"

"He should have put him to work, that's what."

"He should have said to Manuel, 'Look here, if you want a dollar, go earn it first.'"

As a matter of fact, only one man ever gave Boaz the advice direct. That was Campbell Wood. And Wood never sat in that shop.

In every small town there is one young man who is spoken of as "rising." As often as not he is not a native, but "from away."

In this town Campbell Wood was that man. He had come from another part of the state to take a place in the bank. He lived in the upper story of Boaz Negro's house, the ground floor now doing for Boaz and the meager remnant of his family. The old woman who came in to tidy up for the cobbler looked after Wood's rooms as well.

Dealing with Wood, one had first of all the sense of his incorruptibility. A little ruthless perhaps, as if one could imagine him, in defense of his integrity,

cutting off his friend, cutting off his own hand, cutting off the very stream flowing out from the well-springs of human kindness. An exaggeration, perhaps.

He was by long odds the most eligible young man in town; good looking in a spare, ruddy, sandy-haired Scottish fashion; important, incorruptible, "rising." But he took good care of his heart. Precisely that; like a sharp-eyed duenna to his own heart. One felt that here was the man, if ever was the man, who held his destiny in his own hand. Failing, of course, some quite gratuitous and unforeseeable catastrophe.

Not that he was not human, or even incapable of laughter or passion. He was, in a way, immensely accessible. He never clapped one on the shoulder; on the other hand, he never failed to speak. Not even to Boaz.

Returning from the bank in the afternoon, he had always a word for the cobbler. Passing out again to supper at his boarding-place, he had another, about the weather, the prospects of rain. And if Boaz were at work in the dark when he returned from an evening at the Board of Trade, there was a "Good-night, Mr. Negro!"

On Boaz's part, his attitude toward his lodger was curious and paradoxical. He did not pretend to anything less than reverence for the young man's position; precisely on account of that position he was conscious toward Wood of a vague distrust. This was because he was an uneducated fellow.

To the uneducated the idea of large finance is as uncomfortable as the idea of the law. It must be said for Boaz that, responsive to Wood's unfailing civility, he fought against this sensation of dim and somehow shameful distrust. Nevertheless his whole pa-

rental soul was in arms that evening, when, returning from the bank and finding the shop empty of loungers, Wood paused a moment to propose the bit of advice already referred to.

"Haven't you ever thought of having Manuel learn the trade?"

A suspicion, a kind of presumption, lighted the fires of defense.

"Shoemaking," said Boaz, "is good enough for a blind man."

"Oh, I don't know. At least it's better than doing nothing at all."

Boaz's hammer was still. He sat silent, monumental. Outwardly. For once his unfailing response had failed him, "Manuel ain't too stout, you know." Perhaps it had become suddenly inadequate.

He hated Wood; he despised Wood; more than ever before, a hundredfold more, quite abruptly, he distrusted Wood.

How could a man say such things as Wood had said? And where Manuel himself might hear!

Where Manuel *had* heard! Boaz's other emotions—hatred and contempt and distrust—were overshadowed. Sitting in darkness, no sound had come to his ears, no footfall, no infinitesimal creaking of the floor-plank. Yet by some sixth uncanny sense of the blind he was aware that Manuel was standing in the dusk of the entry joining the shop to the house.

Boaz made a Herculean effort. The voice came out of his throat, harsh, bitter, and loud enough to have carried ten times the distance to his son's ears.

"Manuel is a good boy!"

"Yes—h'm—yes—I suppose so."

Wood shifted his weight. He seemed uncomfortable.

"Well. I'll be running along, I—ugh! Heavens!"

Something was happening. Boaz heard exclamations, breathings, the rustle of sleeve-cloth in large, frantic, and futile graspings—all without understanding. Immediately there was an impact on the floor, and with it the unmistakable clink of metal. Boaz even heard that the metal was minted, and that the coins were gold. He understood. A coin-sack, gripped not quite carefully enough for a moment under the other's overcoat, had shifted, slipped, escaped, and fallen.

And Manuel had heard!

It was a dreadful moment for Boaz, dreadful in its native sense, as full of dread. Why? It was a moment of horrid revelation, ruthless clarification. His son, his link with the departed Angelina, that "good boy"—Manuel, standing in the shadow of the entry, visible alone to the blind, and heard the clink of falling gold, and—and *Boaz wished that he had not!*

There, amazing, disconcerting, destroying, stood the sudden fact.

Sitting as impassive and monumental as ever, his strong, bleached hands at rest on his work, round drops of sweat came out on Boaz's forehead. He scarcely took the sense of what Wood was saying. Only fragments.

"Government money, understand—for the break-water workings—huge—too many people know here, everywhere—don't trust the safe—tin safe—'Noah's Ark'—give you my word—Heavens, no!"

It boiled down to this—the money, more money than was good for that antiquated "Noah's Ark" at the bank—and whose contemplated sojourn there overnight was public to too many minds—in short,

Wood was not only incorruptible; he was canny. To what one of those minds, now, would it occur that he should take away that money bodily, under casual cover of his coat, to his own lodgings behind the cobbler-shop of Boaz Negro? For this one, this important night!

He was sorry the coin-sack had slipped, because he did not like to have the responsibility of secret sharer cast upon anyone, even upon Boaz, even by accident. On the other hand, how tremendously fortunate that it had been Boaz and not another. So far as that went, Wood had no more anxiety now than before. One incorruptible knows another.

"I'd trust you, Mr. Negro" (that was one of the fragments which came and stuck in the cobbler's brain), "as far as I would myself. As long as it's only you. I'm just going up here and throw it under the bed. Oh, yes, certainly."

Boaz ate no supper. For the first time in his life food was dry in his gullet. Even under those other successive crushing blows of Fate the full and generous habit of his functionings had carried on unabated; he had always eaten what was set before him. Tonight, over his untouched plate, he watched Manuel with the sightless eyes, keeping track of his every mouthful, word, intonation, breath. What profit he expected to extract from this catlike surveillance it is impossible to say.

When they arose from the supper-table Boaz made another Herculean effort.

"Manuel, you're a good boy!"

The formula had a quality of appeal, of despair, and of command.

"Manuel, you should be short of money, maybe. Look, what's this? A tenner? Well, there's a piece for the pocket; go and enjoy yourself."

He would have been frightened had Manuel, upsetting tradition, declined the offering. With the morbid contrariness of the human imagination, the boy's avid grasping gave him no comfort.

He went out into the shop, where it was already dark, drew to him his last, his tools, mallets, cutters, pegs, leather. And having prepared to work, he remained idle. He found himself listening.

It has been observed that the large phenomena of sunlight and darkness were nothing to Boaz Negro. A busy night was broad day. Yet there was a difference; he knew it with the blind man's eyes, the ears.

Day was a vast confusion, or rather a wide fabric, of sounds; great and little sounds all woven together, voices, footfalls, wheels, far-off whistles and fog-horns, flies buzzing in the sun. Night was another thing. Still there were voices and footfalls, but rarer, emerging from the large, pure body of silence as definite, surprising, and yet familiar entities.

Tonight there was an easterly wind, coming off the water and carrying the sound of waves. So far as other fugitive sounds were concerned it was the same as silence. The wind made little to the ears. It nullified, from one direction at least, the other two visual processes of the blind, the sense of touch and the sense of smell. It blew away from the shop, toward the living-house.

As has been said, Boaz found himself listening, scrutinizing with an extraordinary attention, this immense background of sound. He heard footfalls. The story of that night was written, for him, in footfalls.

He heard them moving about the house, the lower floor, prowling here, there, halting for long spaces, advancing, retreating softly on the planks. About

this aimless, interminable perambulation there was something to twist the nerves, something led and at the same time driven like a succession of frail and indecisive charges.

Boaz lifted himself from his chair. All his impulse called him to make a stir, join battle, cast in the breach the reënforcement of his presence, authority, good will. He sank back again; his hands fell down. The curious impotence of the spectator held him.

He heard footfalls, too, on the upper floor, a little fainter, borne to the inner rather than the outer ear, along the solid causeway of partitions and floor, the legs of his chair, the bony framework of his body. Very faint indeed. Sinking back easily into the background of the wind. They, too, came and went, this room, that, to the passage, the stair-head, and away. About them, too, there was the same quality of being led and at the same time of being driven.

Time went by. In his darkness it seemed to Boaz that hours must have passed. He heard voices. Together with the footfalls, that abrupt, brief, and (in view of Wood's position) astounding interchange of sentences made up his history of the night. Wood must have opened the door at the head of the stair; by the sound of his voice he would be standing there, peering below, perhaps; perhaps listening.

"What's wrong down there?" he called. "Why don't you go to bed?"

After a moment, came Manuel's voice, "Ain't sleepy."

"Neither am I. Look here, do you like to play cards?"

"What kind? Euchre! I like euchre all right. Or pitch."

"Well, what would you say to coming up and having a game of euchre then, Manuel? If you can't sleep?"

"That'd be all right."

The lower footfalls ascended to join the footfalls on the upper floor. There was the sound of a door closing.

Boaz sat still. In the gloom he might have been taken for a piece of furniture, of machinery, an extraordinary lay figure, perhaps, for the trying on of the boots he made. He seemed scarcely to breathe, only the sweat starting from his brow giving him an aspect of life.

He ought to have run, and leaped up that inner stair and pounded with his fists on that door. He seemed unable to move. At rare intervals feet passed on the sidewalk outside, just at his elbow, so to say, and yet somehow, tonight, immeasurably far away. Beyond the orbit of the moon. He heard Rugg, the policeman, noting the silence of the shop, muttering, "Boaz is to bed tonight," as he passed.

The wind increased. It poured against the shop with its deep, continuous sound of a river. Submerged in its body, Boaz caught the note of the town bell striking midnight.

Once more, after a long time, he heard footfalls. He heard them coming around the corner of the shop from the house, footfalls half swallowed by the wind, passing discreetly, without haste, retreating, merging step by step with the huge, incessant background of the wind.

Boaz's muscles tightened all over him. He had the impulse to start up, to fling open the door, shout into the night, "What are you doing? Stop there! Say! What are you doing and where are you going?"

And as before, the curious impotence of the spectator held him motionless. He had not stirred in his chair. And those footfalls, upon which hinged, as it were, that momentous decade of his life, were gone.

There was nothing to listen for now. Yet he continued to listen. Once or twice, half arousing himself, he drew toward him his unfinished work. And then relapsed into immobility.

As has been said, the wind, making little difference to the ears, made all the difference in the world with the sense of feeling and the sense of smell. From the one important direction of the house. That is how it could come about that Boaz Negro could sit, waiting and listening to nothing in the shop and remain ignorant of disaster until the alarm had gone and come back again, pounding, shouting, clanging.

"*Fire!*" he heard them bawling in the street.
"*Fire! Fire!*"

Only slowly did he understand that the fire was in his own house.

There is nothing stiller in the world than the skeleton of a house in the dawn after a fire. It is as if everything living, positive, violent, had been completely drained in the one flaming act of violence, leaving nothing but negation till the end of time. It is worse than a tomb. A monstrous stillness! Even the footfalls of the searchers cannot disturb it, for they are separate and superficial. In its presence they are almost frivolous.

Half an hour after dawn the searchers found the body, if what was left from that consuming ordeal might be called a body. The discovery came as a shock. It seemed incredible that the occupant of that house, no cripple or invalid but an able man in

the prime of youth, should not have awakened and made good his escape. It was the upper floor which had caught; the stairs had stood to the last. It was beyond calculation, even if he had been asleep!

And he had not been asleep. This second and infinitely more appalling discovery began to be known. Slowly. By a hint, a breath of rumor here; there an allusion, half taken back. The man, whose incinerated body still lay curled in its bed of cinders, had been dressed at the moment of disaster; even to the watch, the cuff-buttons, the studs, the very scarf-pin. Fully clothed to the last detail, precisely as those who had dealings at the bank might have seen Campbell Wood any week-day morning for the past eight months. A man does not sleep with his clothes on. The skull of the man had been broken, as if with a blunt instrument of iron. On the charred lacework of the floor lay the leg of an old andiron with which Boaz Negro and his Angelina had set up housekeeping in that new house.

It needed only Mr. Asa Whitelaw, coming up the street from that gaping "Noah's Ark" at the bank, to round out the scandalous circle of circumstance.

"Where is Manuel?"

Boaz Negro still sat in his shop, impassive, monumental, his thick, hairy arms resting on the arms of his chair. The tools and materials of his work remained scattered about him, as his irresolute gathering of the night before had left them. Into his eyes no change could come. He had lost his house, the visible monument of all those years of "skinning his fingers." It would seem that he had lost his son. And he had lost something incalculably precious—that hitherto unquenchable exuberance of the man.

"Where is Manuel?"

When he spoke his voice was unaccented and stale, like the voice of a man already dead.

"Yes, where is Manuel?"

He had answered them with their own question.

"When did you last see him?"

Neither he nor they seemed to take note of that profound irony. "At supper."

"Tell us, Boaz; you knew about this money?"

The cobbler nodded his head.

"And did Manuel?"

He might have taken sanctuary in a legal doubt. How did he know what Manuel knew? Precisely! As before, he nodded his head.

"After supper, Boaz, you were in the shop? But you heard something?"

He went on to tell them what he had heard: the footfalls, below and above, the extraordinary conversation which had broken for a moment the silence of the inner hall. The account was bare, the phrases monosyllabic. He reported only what had been registered on the sensitive tympanums of his ears, to the last whisper of footfalls stealing past the dark wall of the shop. Of all the formless tangle of thoughts, suspicions, interpretations, and the special and personal knowledge given to the blind which moved his brain, he said nothing.

He shut his lips there. He felt himself on the defensive. Just as he distrusted the higher ramifications of finance (his house had gone down uninsured), so before the rites and processes of that inscrutable creature, the Law, he felt himself menaced by the invisible and the unknown, helpless, oppressed; in an abject sense, skeptical.

"Keep clear of the Law!" they had told him in

his youth. The monster his imagination summoned up then still stood beside him in his age.

Having exhausted his monosyllabic and superficial evidence, they could move him no farther. He became deaf and dumb. He sat before them, an image cast in some immensely heavy stuff, inanimate. His lack of visible emotion impressed them. Remembering his exuberance, it was only the stranger to see him unmoving and unmoved. Only once did they catch sight of something beyond. As they were preparing to leave he opened his mouth. What he said was like a swan-song to the years of his exuberant happiness. Even now there was no color of expression in his words, which sounded mechanical.

"Now I have lost everything. My house. My last son. Even my honor. You would not think I would like to live. But I go to live. I go to work. That *cachorra*, one day he shall come back again, in the dark night, to have a look. I shall go to show you all. That *cachorra*!"

(And from that time on, it was noted, he never referred to the fugitive by any other name than *cachorra*, which is a kind of dog. "That *cachorra*!" As if he had forfeited the relationship not only of the family, but of the very genus, the very race! "That *cachorra*!")

He pronounced this resolution without passion. When they assured him that the culprit would come back again indeed, much sooner than he expected, "with a rope around his neck," he shook his head slowly.

"No, you shall not catch that *cachorra* now. But one day——"

There was something about its very colorlessness

which made it sound oracular. It was at least prophetic. They searched, laid their traps, proceeded with all their placards, descriptions, rewards, clues, trails. But on Manuel Negro they never laid their hands.

Months passed and became years. Boaz Negro did not rebuild his house. He might have done so, out of his earnings, for upon himself he spent scarcely anything, reverting to his old habit of an almost miserly economy. Yet perhaps it would have been harder after all. For his earnings were less and less. In that town a cobbler who sits in an empty shop is apt to want for trade. Folk take their boots to mend where they take their bodies to rest and their minds to be edified.

No longer did the walls of Boaz's shop resound to the boastful recollections of young men. Boaz had changed. He had become not only different, but opposite. A metaphor will do best. The spirit of Boaz Negro had been a mellowed hillside giving upon the open sea, the sun, the warm, wild winds from beyond the blue horizon. And covered with flowers, always hungry and thirsty for the sun and the fabulous wind-bright showers of rain. It had become an entrenched camp, lying silent, sullen, verdureless, under a gray sky. He stood solitary against the world. His approaches were closed. He was blind, and he was also deaf and dumb.

Against that what can young fellows do who wish for nothing but to rest themselves and talk about their friends and enemies? They had come and they had tried. They had raised their voices even higher than before. Their boasts had grown louder, more presumptuous, more preposterous, until, before the cold separation of that unmoving and as if contemp-

tuous presence in the cobbler's chair, they burst of their own air, like toy balloons. And they went and left Boaz alone.

There was another thing which served, if not to keep them away, at least not to entice them back. That was the aspect of the place. It was not cheerful. It invited no one. In its way that fire-bitten ruin grew to be almost as great a scandal as the act itself had been. It was plainly an eyesore. A valuable property, on the town's main thoroughfare—and an eyesore! The neighboring owners protested.

Their protestations might as well have gone against a stone wall. The man was deaf and dumb. He had become, in a way, a kind of vegetable, for the quality of a vegetable is that, while it is endowed with life, it remains fixed in one spot. For years Boaz was scarcely seen to move foot out of that shop that was left him, a small, square, blistered promontory on the shores of ruin.

He must indeed have carried out some rudimentary sort of domestic program under the débris at the rear (he certainly did not sleep and eat in the shop). One or two lower rooms were left fairly intact. The outward aspect of the place was formless; it grew to be no more than a mound in time; the charred timbers, one or two still standing, lean and naked against the sky, lost their blackness and faded to a silvery gray. It would have seemed strange, had they not grown accustomed to the thought, to imagine that blind man, like a mole, or some slow slug, turning himself mysteriously in the depths of that gray mound—that time-silvered "eyesore."

When they saw him, however, he was in the shop. They opened the door to take in their work (when other cobblers turned them off), and they saw him

seated in his chair in the half darkness, his whole person, legs, torso, neck, head, as motionless as the vegetable of which we have spoken—only his hands and his bare arms endowed with visible life. The gloom had bleached the skin to the color of damp ivory, and against the background of his immobility they moved with a certain amazing monstrousness, interminably. No, they were never still. One wondered what they could be at. Surely he could not have had enough work now to keep those insatiable hands so monstrously in motion. Even far into the night. Tap-tap-tap! Blows continuous and powerful. On what? On nothing? On the bare iron last? And for what purpose? To what conceivable end?

Well, one could imagine those arms, growing paler, also growing thicker and more formidable with that unceasing labor; the muscles feeding themselves omnivorously on their own waste, the cords toughening, the bone-tissues revitalizing themselves without end. One could imagine the whole aspiration of that mute and motionless man pouring itself out into those pallid arms, and the arms taking it up with a kind of blind greed. Storing it up. Against a day!

“That *cachorra!* One day——”

What were the thoughts of the man? What moved within that motionless cranium covered with long hair? Who can say? Behind everything, of course, stood that bitterness against the world—the blind world—blinder than he would ever be. And against “that *cachorra.*” But this was no longer a thought; it was the man.

Just as all muscular aspiration flowed into his arms, so all the energies of his senses turned to his ears. The man had become, you might say, two arms

and two ears. Can you imagine a man listening, intently, through the waking hours of nine years?

Listening to footfalls. Marking with a special emphasis of concentration the beginning, rise, full passage, falling away, and dying of the footfalls. By day, by night, winter and summer and winter again. Unraveling the skein of footfalls passing up and down the street!

For three years he wondered when they would come. For the next three years he wondered if they would ever come. It was during the last three that a doubt began to trouble him. It gnawed at his huge moral strength. Like a hidden seepage of water, it undermined (in anticipation) his terrible resolution. It was a sign perhaps of age, a slipping away of the reckless infallibility of youth.

Supposing, after all, that his ears should fail him. Supposing they were capable of being tricked, without his being able to know it. Supposing that that *cachorra* should come and go, and he, Boaz, living in some vast delusion, some unrealized distortion of memory, should let him pass unknown. Supposing precisely this thing had already happened!

Or the other way around. What if he should hear the footfalls coming, even into the very shop itself? What, then, if he should strike? And what then, if it were not that *cachorra* after all? How many tens and hundreds of millions of people were there in the world? Was it possible for them all to have footfalls distinct and different?

Then they would take him and hang him. And that *cachorra* might then come and go at his own will, undisturbed.

As he sat there sometimes the sweat rolled down his nose, cold as rain.

Supposing!

Sometimes, quite suddenly, in broad day, in the booming silence of the night, he would start. Not outwardly. But beneath the pale integument of his skin all his muscles tightened and his nerves sang. His breathing stopped. It seemed almost as if his heart stopped.

What was it? Were these the feet, there, emerging faintly from the distance? Yes, there was something about them. Yes. Memory was in travail. Yes, yes, yes! No! The footfalls were already passing. They were gone, swallowed up already by time and space. Had that been that *cachorra*?

Nothing in his life had been so hard to meet as this insidious drain of distrust in his own powers; this sense of a traitor within the walls. His iron-gray hair had turned white. It was always this now, from the beginning of the day to the end of the night: how was he to know? How was he to be inevitably, unshakably, sure?

Curiously, after all this purgatory of doubts, he did know them. For a moment at least, when he heard them, he was unshakably sure.

It was on an evening of the winter holidays, the Portuguese festival of *Menin' Jesus*. Christ was born again in a hundred mangers on a hundred tiny altars; there was cake and wine; songs went shouting by to the accompaniment of mandolins and tramping feet. The wind blew cold under a clear sky. In all the houses there were lights; even in Boaz Negro's shop a lamp was lit just now, for a man had been in for a pair of boots which Boaz had patched. The man had gone out again. Boaz was thinking of blowing out the light. It meant nothing to him.

He leaned forward, judging the position of the lamp-chimney by the heat on his face, and puffed out his cheeks to blow. Then his cheeks collapsed suddenly, and he sat back again.

It was not odd that he had failed to hear the footfalls until they were actually within the door. A crowd of merry-makers was passing just then; their songs and tramping almost shook the shop.

Boaz sat back. Beneath his passive exterior his nerves thrummed; his muscles had grown as hard as wood. Yes! Yes! But no! He had heard nothing; no more than a single step, a single foot-pressure on the planks within the door. Dear God! He could not tell!

Going through the pain of an enormous effort, he opened his lips.

"What can I do for you?"

"Well, I—I don't know. To tell the truth——"

The voice was unfamiliar, but it might be assumed. Boaz held himself. His face remained blank, interrogating, slightly helpless.

"I am a little deaf," he said. "Come nearer."

The footfalls came halfway across the intervening floor, and there appeared to hesitate. The voice, too, had a note of uncertainty.

"I was just looking around. I have a pair of—well, you mend shoes?"

Boaz nodded his head. It was not in response to the words, for they meant nothing. What he had heard was the footfalls on the floor.

Now he was sure. As has been said, for a moment at least after he heard them he was unmistakably sure. The congestion of his muscles had passed. He was at peace.

The voice became audible once more. Before the

massive preoccupation of the blind man it became still less certain of itself.

"Well, I haven't got the shoes with me. I was—just looking around."

It was amazing to Boaz, this miraculous sensation of peace.

"Wait!" Then bending his head as if listening to the winter wind, "It's cold tonight. You've left the door open. But wait!" Leaning down, his hand fell on a rope's end hanging by the chair. The gesture was one continuous, undeviating movement of the hand. No hesitation. No groping. How many hundreds, how many thousands of times, had his hand schooled itself in that gesture!

A single strong pull. With a little *bang* the front door had swung to and latched itself. Not only the front door. The other door, leading to the rear, had closed, too, and latched itself with a little *bang*. And leaning forward from his chair, Boaz blew out the light.

There was not a sound in the shop. Outside, feet continued to go by, ringing on the frozen road; voices were lifted; the wind hustled about the corners of the wooden shell with a continuous, shrill note of whistling. All of this outside, as on another planet. Within the blackness of the shop the complete silence persisted.

Boaz listened. Sitting on the edge of his chair, half-crouching, his head, with its long, unkempt, white hair, bent slightly to one side, he concentrated upon this chambered silence the full powers of his senses. He hardly breathed. The other person in that room could not be breathing at all, it seemed.

No, there was not a breath, not the stirring of a sole on wood, not the infinitesimal rustle of any

fabric. It was as if in this utter stoppage of sound, even the blood had ceased to flow in the veins and arteries of that man, who was like a rat caught in a trap.

It was appalling even to Boaz; even to the cat. Listening became more than a labor. He began to have to fight against a growing impulse to shout out loud, to leap, sprawl forward without aim in that unstirred darkness—do something. Sweat rolled down from behind his ears, into his shirt-collar. He gripped the chair-arms. To keep quiet he sank his teeth into his lower lip. He would not! He would not!

And of a sudden he heard before him, in the center of the room, an outburst of breath, an outrush from lungs in the extremity of pain, thick, laborious, fearful. A coughing up of damned air.

Pushing himself from the arms of the chair, Boaz leaped.

His fingers, passing swiftly through the air, closed on something. It was a sheaf of hair, bristly and thick. It was a man's beard.

On the road outside, up and down the street for a hundred yards, merry-making people turned to look at one another. With an abrupt cessation of laughter, of speech. Inquiringly. Even with an unconscious dilation of the pupils of their eyes.

"What was that?"

There had been a scream. There could be no doubt of that. A single, long-drawn note. Immensely high-pitched. Not as if it were human.

"What was that? Where'd it come from?"

Those nearest said it came from the cobbler-shop of Boaz Negro. They went and tried the door. It was closed; even locked, as if for the night. There

was no light behind the window-shade. But Boaz would not have a light. They beat on the door. No answer.

But from where, then, had that prolonged, as if animal, note come?

They ran about, penetrating into the side lanes, interrogating, prying. Coming back at last, inevitably, to the neighborhood of Boaz Negro's shop.

The body lay on the floor at Boaz's feet, where it had tumbled down slowly after a moment from the spasmodic embrace of his arms; those ivory-colored arms which had beaten so long upon the bare surface of a last. Blows continuous and powerful. It seemed incredible. They were so weak now. They could not have lifted the hammer now.

But that beard! That bristly, thick, square beard of a stranger!

His hands remembered it. Standing with his shoulders fallen forward and his weak arms hanging down, Boaz began to shiver. The whole thing was incredible. What was on the floor there, upheld in the vast gulf of darkness, he could not see. Neither could he hear it; smell it. Nor (if he did not move his foot) could he feel it. What he did not hear, smell, or touch did not exist. It was not there. Incredible!

But that beard! All the accumulated doubtings of those years fell down upon him. After all, the thing he had been so fearful of in his weak imaginings had happened. He had killed a stranger. He, Boaz Negro, had murdered an innocent man!

And all on account of that beard. His deep panic made him light-headed. He began to confuse cause and effect. If it were not for that beard, it would have been that *cachorra*.

On this basis he began to reason with a crazy di-

rectness. And to act. He went and pried open the door into the entry. From a shelf he took down his razor. A big, heavy-heeled strop. His hands began to hurry. And the mug, half full of soap. And water. It would have to be cold water. But, after all, he thought (light-headedly), at this time of night——

Outside, they were at the shop again. The crowd's habit is to forget a thing quickly, once it is out of sight and hearing. But there had been something about that solitary cry which continued to bother them, even in memory. Where had it been? Where had it come from? And those who had stood nearest the cobbler-shop had heard it again. They were certain now, dead certain. They could swear!

In the end they broke down the door.

If Boaz heard them he gave no sign. An absorption as complete as it was monstrous wrapped him. Kneeling in the glare of the lantern they had brought, as impervious as his own shadow sprawling behind him, he continued to shave the dead man on the floor.

No one touched him. Their minds and imaginations were arrested by the gigantic proportions of the act. The unfathomable presumption of the act. As throwing murder in their faces to the tune of a jig in a barber-shop. It is a fact that none of them so much as thought of touching him. No less than all of them, together with all other men, shorn of their imaginations—that is to say, the expressionless and imperturbable creature of the Law—would be sufficient to touch that ghastly man.

On the other hand, they could not leave him alone. They could not go away. They watched. They saw the damp, lather-soaked beard of that victimized stranger falling away, stroke by stroke of

the flashing, heavy razor. The dead denuded by the blind!

It was seen that Boaz was about to speak. It was something important he was about to utter; something, one would say, fatal. The words would not come all at once. They swelled his cheeks out. His razor was arrested. Lifting his face, he encircled the watchers with a gaze at once of imploration and of command. As if he could see them. As if he could read his answer in the expressions of their faces.

"Tell me one thing now. Is it that *cachorra*?"

For the first time those men in the room made sounds. They shuffled their feet. It was as if an uncontrollable impulse to ejaculation, laughter, derision, forbidden by the presence of death, had gone down into their boot-soles.

"Manuel?" one of them said. "You mean *Manuel*?"

Boaz laid the razor down on the floor beside its work. He got up from his knees slowly, as if his joints hurt. He sat down in his chair, rested his hands on the arms, and once more encircled the company with his sightless gaze.

"Not Manuel. Manuel was a good boy. But tell me now, is it that *cachorra*?"

Here was something out of their calculations; something for them, mentally, to chew on. Mystification is a good thing sometimes. It gives the brain a fillip, stirs memory, puts the gears of imagination into mesh. One man, an old, tobacco-chewing fellow, began to stare harder at the face on the floor. Something moved in his intellect.

"No, but look here now——"

He had even stopped chewing. But he was fore-

stalled by another. "Say, now, if it don't look like that fellow Wood, himself. The bank fellow—that was burned—remember? Himself."

"That *cachorra* was not burned. Not that Wood. You fool."

Boaz spoke from his chair. They hardly knew his voice, emerging from its long silence; it was so didactic and arid.

"That *cachorra* was not burned. It was my boy that was burned. It was that *cachorra* called my boy upstairs. That *cachorra* put his clothes on my boy, and he set my house on fire. I knew that all the time. Because when I heard those feet come out of my house and go away, I knew they were the feet of that *cachorra* from the bank. I did not know where he was going to. Something said to me—you better ask him where he is going to. But then I said, you are foolish. He had the money from the bank. I did not know. And then my house was on fire. No, it was not my boy that went away; it was that *cachorra* all the time. You fools! Did you think I was waiting for my own boy?

"Now I show you all," he said at the end. "And now I can get hanged."

No one ever touched Boaz Negro for that murder. For murder it was in the eyes and letter of the Law. The Law in a small town is sometimes a curious creature; it is sometimes blind only in one eye.

Their minds and imaginations in that town were arrested by the romantic proportions of the act. Simply, no one took it up. I believe the man, Wood, was understood to have died from heart-failure.

When they asked Boaz why he had not told what he knew as to the identity of that fugitive in the night, he seemed to find it hard to say exactly. How

could a man of no education define for them his own but half-defined misgivings about the Law, his sense of oppression, constraint, and awe, of being on the defensive, even, in an abject way, his skepticism? About his wanting, come what might, to "keep clear of the Law"?

He did say this, "You would have laughed at me."

And this, "If I told folk it was Wood went away, then I say he would not dare come back again."

That was the last. Very shortly he began to refuse to talk about the thing at all. The act was completed. Like the creature of fable, it had consumed itself. Out of that old man's consciousness it had departed. Amazingly. Like a dream dreamed out.

Slowly at first, in a makeshift, piece-at-a-time, poor man's way, Boaz commenced to rebuild his house. That "eyesore" vanished.

And slowly at first, like the miracle of a green shoot pressing out from the dead earth, that priceless and unquenchable exuberance of the man was seen returning. Unquenchable, after all.

QUESTIONS

1. Explain the meaning of the first paragraph. How does it prepare you for the story?
2. Where in the story do you first discover Negro's ability to recognize footfalls?
3. Do you understand such powers to be common with blind persons?
4. What are your first impressions of Campbell Wood? Of Manuel?
5. Why is it necessary for the author to cast suspicion upon Manuel?
6. How do you account for the fact that Boaz Negro alone distrusts Wood?

7. Does Wood satisfactorily explain the matter of the coin sack?
8. Describe the difference between day and night to the blind man.
9. Do you think the first murder was premeditated?
10. What made Negro so certain that the culprit would not be captured?
11. Explain what the author means in saying that the world was more blind than Boaz ever would be.
12. Why did Boaz not attempt to clear up the mystery sooner?
13. Why was Boaz not punished for his crime?
14. Find and explain some examples of figures of speech.
15. Where is the point of greatest interest in this story?
16. How do you agree with what Edward J. O'Brien has to say about Wilbur Daniel Steele?
17. In what way is this story by Steele suggestive of the writings of Edgar Allan Poe?

GULLIVER THE GREAT

BY

WALTER A. DYER

WALTER A. DYER

(1878-)

If you like dogs, you will like Walter A. Dyer's stories, of which "Gulliver the Great" is one of the best. Picture yourself stranded in mid-ocean on the same small raft with an enormous creature of whom you are mortally afraid. Mr. Dyer has used this situation for the basis of a thrilling story, and in his own words he tells us of the unusual way in which the tale happened to be written.

"There is one curious fact concerning the writing of 'Gulliver the Great' which might be interesting to youthful readers. It was a few years ago when I had just begun writing dog stories and they were much in my mind. My chief trouble was inventing plots, and at this time I thought I had run out of ideas. I was anxious to write a dog story but couldn't think of one. I made a few false starts one day and then had to give it up. The next morning while I was dressing it all came to me—the picture of Gulliver on the raft and the general outline of the story. I believe I had dreamed it, but am not sure. There is a period of semi-consciousness in the morning, a sort of twilight zone of the mind, when the imagination seems to have free play and one scarcely knows whether one is dreaming or thinking. At any rate I went on thinking about it as I got up and dressed and soon had the story all worked out in my mind. I think this is the only time that I have had just this experience. I have dreamed other stories, but always, when viewed by the light of day, they have proved to be illogical and defective and usually quite silly."

Mr. Dyer is a Massachusetts man. He was born in Roslindale and educated at Springfield High School and Amherst College. He is married, and still lives in Massachusetts, at Rock Walls Farm, Amherst.

You would perhaps enjoy reading the book of which "Gulliver the Great" is title story; it contains other interesting dog stories. "The Dogs of Boytown," "Pierrot, Dog of Belgium," and "Many a Dog There Be" are other good books by Walter A. Dyer.

GULLIVER THE GREAT

It was a mild evening in early spring, and the magnolias were in bloom. We motored around the park, turned up a side street, and finally came to a throbbing standstill before the Churchwarden Club.

There was nothing about its exterior to indicate that it was a clubhouse at all, but within there was an indefinable atmosphere of early Victorian comfort. There was something about it that suggested Mr. Pickwick. Old prints of horses and ships and battles hung upon the walls, and the oak was dark and old. There seemed to be no decorative scheme or keynote, and yet the atmosphere was utterly distinctive. It was my first visit to the Churchwarden Club, of which my quaint, old-fashioned Uncle Ford had long been a member, and I was charmed.

We dined in the rathskeller, the walls of which were completely covered with long churchwarden pipes, arranged in the most intricate and marvelous patterns; and after our mutton-chop and ale and plum pudding, we filled with the choicest of tobaccos the pipes which the old major-domo brought us.

Then came Jacob R. Enderby to smoke with us.

Tall and spare he was, with long, straight, black hair, large aquiline nose, and piercing eyes. I disgraced myself by staring at him. I didn't know that such a man existed in New York, and yet I couldn't decide whether his habitat should be Arizona or Cape Cod.

Enderby and Uncle Ford were deep in a discussion of the statesmanship of James G. Blaine, when a waiter summoned my uncle to the telephone.

I neglected to state that my uncle, in his prosaic

hours, is a physician; and this was a call. I knew it the moment I saw the waiter approaching. I was disappointed and disgusted.

Uncle Ford saw this and laughed.

"Cheer up!" said he. "You needn't come with me to visit the sick. I'll be back in an hour, and meanwhile Mr. Enderby will take care of you; won't you, Jake?"

For answer Enderby arose, and refilling his pipe took me by the arm, while my uncle got into his overcoat. As he passed us on the way out he whispered in my ear:

"Talk about dogs."

I heard and nodded.

Enderby led me to the lounge or loafing-room, an oak-paneled apartment in the rear of the floor above, with huge leather chairs and a seat in the bay window. Save for a gray-haired old chap dozing over a copy of *Simplicissimus*, the room was deserted.

But no sooner had Enderby seated himself on the window-seat than there was a rush and a commotion, and a short, glad bark, and Nubbins, the steward's bull-terrier, bounded in and landed at Enderby's side with canine expressions of great joy.

I reached forward to pat him, but he paid absolutely no attention to me.

At last his wriggling subsided, and he settled down with his head on Enderby's knee, the picture of content. Then I recalled my uncle's parting injunction.

"Friend of yours?" I suggested.

Enderby smiled. "Yes," he said, "we're friends, I guess. And the funny part of it is that he doesn't pay any attention to any one else except his master.

They all act that way with me, dogs do." And he pulled Nubbins's stubby ears.

"Natural attraction, I suppose," said I.

"Yes, it is," he answered, with the modest frankness of a big man. "It's a thing hard to explain, though there's a sort of reason for it in my case."

I pushed toward him a little tobacco-laden teakwood stand hopefully. He refilled and lighted.

"It's an extraordinary thing, even so," he said, puffing. "Every dog nowadays seems to look upon me as his long-lost master, but it wasn't always so. I hated dogs and they hated me."

Not wishing to say "Really" or "Indeed" to this big, outdoor man, I simply grunted my surprise.

"Yes, we were born enemies. More than that, I was afraid of dogs. A little fuzzy toy dog, ambling up to me in a room full of company, with his tail wagging, gave me the shudders. I couldn't touch the beast. And as for big dogs outdoors, I feared them like the plague. I would go blocks out of my way to avoid one.

"I don't remember being particularly cowardly about other things, but I just couldn't help this. It was in my blood, for some reason or other. It was the bane of my existence. I couldn't see what the brutes were put into the world for, or how any one could have anything to do with them.

"And the dogs reciprocated. They disliked and distrusted me. The most docile old Brunos would growl and show their teeth when I came near."

"Did the change come suddenly?" I asked.

"Quite. It was in 1901. I accepted a commission from an importing and trading company to go to the Philippines to do a little quiet exploring, and spent four months in the sickly place. Then I got

the fever, and when I recovered I couldn't get out of there too soon.

"I reached Manila just in time to see the mail steamer disappearing around the point, and I was mad. There would be another in six days, but I couldn't wait. I was just crazy to get back home.

"I made inquiries and learned of an old tramp steamer, named the *Old Squaw*, making ready to leave for Honolulu on the following day with a cargo of hemp and stuff, and a bunch of Moros for some show in the States, and I booked passage on that.

"She was the worst old tub you ever saw. I didn't learn much about her, but I verily believe her to have been a condemned excursion boat. She wouldn't have been allowed to run to Coney Island.

"She was battered and unpainted, and she wallowed horribly. I don't believe she could have reached Honolulu much before the next regular boat, but I couldn't wait, and I took her.

"I made myself as comfortable as possible, bribed the cook to insure myself against starvation, and swung a hammock on the forward deck as far as possible from the worst of the vile smells.

"But we hadn't lost sight of Manila Bay when I discovered that there was a dog aboard—and such a dog! I had never seen one that sent me into such a panic as this one, and he had free range of the ship. A Great Dane he was, named Gulliver, and he was the pride of the captain's rum-soaked heart.

"With all my fear, I realized he was a magnificent animal, but I looked on him as a gigantic devil. Without exception, he was the biggest dog I ever saw, and as muscular as a lion. He lacked some points that show judges set store by, but he had the size and the build.

"I have seen Vohl's Vulcan and the Wurtemberg breed, but they were fox-terriers compared with Gulliver. His tail was as big around as my arm, and the cook lived in terror of his getting into the galley and wagging it; and he had a mouth that looked to me like the crater of Mauna Loa, and a voice that shook the planking when he spoke.

"I first caught sight of him appearing from behind a huge coil of cordage in the stern. He stretched and yawned, and I nearly died of fright.

"I caught up a belaying-pin, though little good that would have done me. I think he saw me do it, and doubtless he set me down for an enemy then and there.

"We were well out of the harbor, and there was no turning back, but I would have given my right hand to be off that boat. I fully expected him to eat me up, and I slept with that belaying-pin sticking into my ribs in the hammock, and with my revolver loaded and handy.

"Fortunately, Gulliver's dislike for me took the form of sublime contempt. He knew I was afraid of him, and he despised me for it. He was a great pet with the captain and crew, and even the Moros treated him with admiring respect when they were allowed on deck. I couldn't understand it. I would as soon have made a pet of a hungry boa-constrictor.

"On the third day out the poor old boiler burst and the *Old Squaw* caught fire. She was dry and rotten inside and she burned like tinder. No attempt was made to extinguish the flames, which got into the hemp in the hold in short order.

"The smoke was stifling, and in a jiffy all hands were struggling with the boats. The Moros came tumbling up from below and added to the confusion with their terrified yells.

"The davits were old and rusty, and the men were soon fighting among themselves. One boat dropped stern foremost, filled, and sank immediately, and the *Old Squaw* herself was visibly settling.

"I saw there was no chance of getting away in the boats, and I recalled a life-raft on the deck forward near my hammock. It was a sort of catamaran—a double platform on a pair of hollow, water-tight, cylindrical buoys. It wasn't twenty feet long and about half as broad, but it would have to do. I fancy it was a forgotten relic of the old excursion-boat days.

"There was no time to lose, for the *Old Squaw* was bound to sink presently. Besides, I was aft with the rest, and the flames were licking up the deck and running-gear in the waist of the boat.

"The galley, which was amidships near the engine-room, had received the full force of the explosion, and the cook lay moaning in the lee scuppers with a small water-cask thumping against his chest. I couldn't stop to help the man, but I did kick the cask away.

"It seemed to be nearly full, and it occurred to me that I should need it. I glanced quickly around, and luckily found a tin of biscuits that had also been blown out of the galley. I picked this up, and rolling the cask of water ahead of me as rapidly as I could, I made my way through the hot, stifling smoke to the bow of the boat.

"I kicked at the life-raft; it seemed to be sound, and I lashed the biscuits and water to it. I also threw on a coil of rope and a piece of sail-cloth. I saw nothing else about that could possibly be of any value to me. I abandoned my trunk for fear it would only prove troublesome.

"Then I hacked the raft loose with my knife and shoved it over to the bulwark. Apparently no one had seen me, for there was no one else forward of the sheet of flame that now cut the boat in two.

"The raft was a mighty heavy affair, but I managed to raise one end to the rail. I don't believe I would ever have been able to heave it over under any circumstances, but I didn't have to.

"I felt a great upheaval, and the prow of the *Old Squaw* went up into the air. I grabbed the ropes that I had lashed the food on with and clung to the raft. The deck became almost perpendicular, and it was a miracle that the raft didn't slide down with me into the flames. Somehow it stuck where it was.

"Then the boat sank with a great roar, and for about a thousand years, it seemed to me, I was under water. I didn't do anything. I couldn't think.

"I was only conscious of a tremendous weight of water and a feeling that I would burst open. Instinct alone made me cling to the raft.

"When it finally brought me to the surface I was as nearly dead as I care to be. I lay there on the thing in a half-conscious condition for an endless time. If my life had depended on my doing something, I would have been lost.

"Then gradually I came to, and began to spit out salt water and gasp for breath. I gathered my wits together and sat up. My hands were absolutely numb, and I had to loosen the grip of my fingers with the help of my toes. Odd sensation.

"Then I looked about me. My biscuits and water and rope were safe, but the sail-cloth had vanished. I remember that this annoyed me hugely at the time, though I don't know what earthly good it would have been.

"The sea was fairly calm, and I could see all about. Not a human being was visible, only a few floating bits of wreckage. Every man on board must have gone down with the ship and drowned, except myself.

"Then I caught sight of something that made my heart stand still. The huge head of Gulliver was coming rapidly toward me through the water!

"The dog was swimming strongly, and must have leaped from the *Old Squaw* before she sank. My raft was the only thing afloat large enough to hold him, and he knew it.

"I drew my revolver, but it was soaking wet and useless. Then I sat down on the cracker tin and gritted my teeth and waited. I had been alarmed, I must admit, when the boiler blew up and the panic began, but that was nothing to the terror that seized me now.

"Here I was all alone on the top of the Pacific Ocean with a horrible demon making for me as fast as he could swim. My mind was benumbed, and I could think of nothing to do. I trembled and my teeth rattled. I prayed for a shark, but no shark came.

"Soon Gulliver reached the raft and placed one of his forepaws on it and then the other. The top of it stood six or eight inches above the water, and it took a great effort for the dog to raise himself. I wanted to kick him back, but I didn't dare to move.

"Gulliver struggled mightily. Again and again he reared his great shoulders above the sea, only to be cast back, scratching and kicking, at a lurch of the raft.

"Finally a wave favored him, and he caught the

edge of the under platform with one of his hind feet. With a stupendous effort he heaved his huge bulk over the edge and lay sprawling at my feet, panting and trembling."

Enderby paused and gazed out of the window with a big sigh, as though the recital of his story had brought back some of the horror of his remarkable experience.

Nubbins looked up inquiringly, and then snuggled closer to his friend, while Enderby smoothed the white head.

"Well," he continued, "there we were. You can't possibly imagine how I felt unless you, too, have been afflicted with dog-fear. It was awful. And I hated the brute so. I could have torn him limb from limb if I had had the strength. But he was vastly more powerful than I. I could only fear him.

"By and by he got up and shook himself. I cowered on my cracker-tin, but he only looked at me contemptuously, went to the other end of the raft, and lay down to wait patiently for deliverance.

"We remained this way until nightfall. The sea was comparatively calm, and we seemed to be drifting but slowly. We were in the path of ships likely to be passing one way or the other, and I would have been hopeful of the outcome if it had not been for my feared and hated companion.

"I began to feel faint, and opened the cracker-tin. The biscuits were wet with salt water, but I ate a couple, and left the cover of the tin open to dry them. Gulliver looked around, and I shut the tin hastily. But the dog never moved. He was not disposed to ask any favors. By kicking the sides of the cask and prying with my knife, I managed to get the bung

out and took a drink. Then I settled myself on the raft with my back against the cask, and longed for a smoke.

"The gentle motion of the raft produced a lulling effect on my exhausted nerves, and I began to nod, only to awake with a start, with fear gripping at my heart. I dared not sleep. I don't know what I thought Gulliver would do to me, for I did not understand dogs, but I felt that I must watch him constantly. In the starlight I could see that his eyes were open. Gulliver was watchful too.

"All night long I kept up a running fight with drowsiness. I dozed at intervals, but never for long at a time. It was a horrible night, and I cannot tell you how I longed for day and welcomed it when it came.

"I must have slept toward dawn, for I suddenly became conscious of broad daylight. I roused myself, stood up, and swung my arms and legs to stir up circulation, for the night had been chilly. Gulliver arose, too, and stood silently watching me until I ceased for fear. When he had settled down again I got my breakfast out of the cracker-tin. Gulliver was restless, and was evidently interested.

"'He must be hungry,' I thought, and then a new fear caught me. I had only to wait until he became very hungry and then he would surely attack me. I concluded that it would be wiser to feed him, and I tossed him a biscuit.

"I expected to see him grab it ravenously, and wondered as soon as I had thrown it if the taste of food would only serve to make him more ferocious. But at first he would not touch it. He only lay there with his great head on his paws and glowered at me. Distrust was plainly visible in his face. I had never

realized before that a dog's face could express the subtler emotions.

"His gaze fascinated me, and I could not take my eyes from his. The bulk of him was tremendous as he lay there, and I noticed the big, swelling muscles of his jaw. At last he arose, sniffed suspiciously at the biscuit, and looked up at me again.

"'It's all right; eat it!' I cried.

"The sound of my own voice frightened me. I had not intended to speak to him. But in spite of my strained tone he seemed somewhat reassured.

"He took a little nibble, and then swallowed the biscuit after one or two crunches, and looked up expectantly. I threw him another and he ate that.

"'That's all,' said I. 'We must be sparing of them.'

"I was amazed to discover how perfectly he understood. He lay down again and licked his chops.

"Late in the forenoon I saw a line of smoke on the horizon, and soon a steamer hove into view. I stood up and waved my coat frantically, but to no purpose. Gulliver stood up and looked from me to the steamer, apparently much interested.

"'Too far off,' I said to Gulliver. 'I hope the next one will come nearer.'

"At midday I dined, and fed Gulliver. This time he took the two biscuits quite without reserve and whacked his great tail against the raft. It seemed to me that his attitude was less hostile, and I wondered at it.

"When I took my drink from the cask, Gulliver showed signs of interest.

"'I suppose dogs get thirsty, too,' I said aloud.

"Gulliver rapped with his tail. I looked about

for some sort of receptacle, and finally pulled off my shoe, filled it with water, and shoved it toward him with my foot. He drank gratefully.

"During the afternoon I sighted another ship, but it was too distant to notice me. However, the sea remained calm and I did not despair.

"After we had had supper, I settled back against my cask, resolved to keep awake, for still I did not trust Gulliver. The sun set suddenly and the stars came out, and I found myself strangely lonesome. It seemed as though I had been alone out there on the Pacific for weeks. The miles and miles of heaving waters, almost on a level with my eye, were beginning to get on my nerves. I longed for some one to talk to, and wished I had dragged the half-breed cook along with me for company. I sighed loudly, and Gulliver raised his head.

"'Lonesome out here, isn't it?' I said simply to hear the sound of my own voice.

"Then for the first time Gulliver spoke. He made a deep sound in his throat, but it wasn't a growl, and with all my ignorance of dog language I knew it.

"Then I began to talk. I talked about everything—the people back home and all that—and Gulliver listened. I know more about dogs now, and I know that the best way to make friends with a dog is to talk to him. He can't talk back, but he can understand a heap more than you think he can.

"Finally Gulliver, who had kept his distance all this time, arose and came toward me. My words died in my throat. What was he going to do? To my immense relief he did nothing but sink down at my feet with a grunt and curl his huge body into a semicircle. He had dignity, Gulliver had. He

wanted to be friendly, but he would not presume. However, I had lost interest in conversation, and sat watching him and wondering.

"In spite of my firm resolution, I fell asleep at length from sheer exhaustion, and never woke until daybreak. The sky was clouded and our craft was pitching. Gulliver was standing in the middle of the raft, looking at me in evident alarm. I glanced over my shoulder, and the blackness of the horizon told me that a storm was coming, and coming soon.

"I made fast our slender provender, tied the end of a line about my own waist for safety, and waited.

"In a short time the storm struck us in all its tropical fury. The raft pitched and tossed, now high up at one end, and now at the other, and sometimes almost engulfed in the waves.

"Gulliver was having a desperate time to keep aboard. His blunt claws slipped on the wet deck of the raft, and he fell and slid about dangerously. The thought flashed across my mind that the storm might prove to be a blessing in disguise, and that I might soon be rid of the brute.

"As I clung there to the lashings, I saw him slip down to the further end of the raft, his hind quarters actually over the edge. A wave swept over him, but still he clung, panting madly. Then the raft righted itself for a moment, and as he hung there he gave me a look I shall never forget—a look of fear, of pleading, of reproach, and yet of silent courage. And with all my stupidity I read that look. Somehow it told me that I was the master, after all, and he the dog. I could not resist it. Cautiously I raised my self and loosened the spare rope I had saved. As the raft tipped the other way Gulliver regained his footing and came sliding toward me.

"Quickly I passed the rope around his body, and as the raft dived again I hung on to the rope with one hand, retaining my own hold with the other. Gulliver's great weight nearly pulled my arm from its socket, but he helped mightily, and during the next moment of equilibrium I took another turn about his body and made the end of the rope fast.

"The storm passed as swiftly as it had come, and though it left us drenched and exhausted, we were both safe.

"That evening Gulliver crept close to me as I talked, and I let him. Loneliness will make a man do strange things.

"On the fifth day, when our provisions were nearly gone, and I had begun to feel the sinking dullness of despair, I sighted a steamer apparently coming directly toward us. Instantly I felt new life in my limbs and around my heart, and while the boat was yet miles away I began to shout and to wave my coat.

"*'I believe she's coming, old man!'* I cried to Gulliver; *'I believe she's coming!'*

"I soon wearied of this foolishness and sat down to wait. Gulliver came close and sat beside me, and for the first time I put my hand on him. He looked up at me and rapped furiously with his tail. I patted his head—a little gingerly, I must confess.

"It was a big, smooth head, and it felt solid and strong. I passed my hand down his neck, his back, his flanks. He seemed to quiver with joy. He leaned his huge body against me. Then he bowed his head and licked my shoe.

"A feeling of intense shame and unworthiness came over me, with the realization of how completely I had misunderstood him. Why should this

great, powerful creature lick my shoe? It was incredible.

"Then, somehow, everything changed. Fear and distrust left me, and a feeling of comradeship and understanding took their place. We two had been through so much together. A dog was no longer a frightful beast to me; he was a dog! I cannot think of a nobler word. And Gulliver had licked my shoe! Doubtless it was only the fineness of his perception that had prevented him from licking my hand. I might have resented that. I put my arms suddenly around Gulliver's neck and hugged him. I loved that dog!

"Slowly, slowly, the steamer crawled along, but still she kept to her course. When she was about a mile away, however, I saw that she would not pass as near to us as I had hoped; so I began once more my waving and yelling. She came nearer, nearer, but still showed no sign of observing us.

"She was abreast of us, and passing. I was in a frenzy!

"She was so near that I could make out the figure of the captain on the bridge, and other figures on the deck below. It seemed as though they must see us, though I realized how low in the water we stood, and how pitifully weak and hoarse my voice was. I had been a fool to waste it. Then an idea struck me.

" 'Speak!' I cried to Gulliver, who stood watching beside me. 'Speak, old man!'

"Gulliver needed no second bidding. A roar like that of all the bulls of Bashan rolled out over the blue Pacific. Again and again Gulliver gave voice, deep, full, powerful. His great sides heaved with the mighty effort, his red, cavernous mouth open, and his head raised high.

"'Good, old man!' I cried. 'Good!' And again that magnificent voice boomed forth.

"Then something happened on board the steamer. The figures came to the side. I waved my coat and danced. Then they saw us.

"I was pretty well done up when they took us aboard, and I slept for twenty-four hours straight. When I awoke there sat Gulliver by my bunk, and when I turned to look at him he lifted a great paw and put it on my arm."

Enderby ceased, and there was silence in the room save for the light snoring of Nubbins.

"You took him home with you, I suppose?" I asked.

Enderby nodded.

"And you have him still?" I certainly wanted to have a look at that dog.

But he did not answer. I saw an expression of great sadness come into his eyes as he gazed out of the window, and I knew that Jacob Enderby had finished his story.

QUESTIONS

1. Explain the manner in which the author sets the scene for the story.
2. Does this setting add to or detract from the interest?
3. What do you think of the method of story telling in the first person?
4. Why is Nubbins introduced?
5. Is Enderby's early hatred of dogs a valuable element in the tale?
6. What prompted Enderby to take passage on the *Old Squaw*?
7. Describe the *Old Squaw*.
8. How did Enderby save himself from the wreck?
9. Describe his sensations as Gulliver approached the raft.
10. Designate the steps by which the character of the dog is presented.

11. In what ways does the dog arouse our admiration?
12. Explain the manner in which mutual friendship was established between the man and the dog.
13. How was the rescue effected?
14. Do you discover anything improbable about this story? Does it affect the value of the narrative?
15. What adjective best describes this tale?
16. Is the dog too intelligent to be true to life?
17. How does a dog know when a person is afraid of him?
18. Be prepared to tell the class some incident of interest about a dog or other animal you have owned or observed.
19. Suppose you were a passenger on the ship which rescued Mr. Enderby. Describe the situation from your point of view.
20. Which showed the finer spirit in this story, the man or the dog?

A BASQUE WINDFALL

BY

DOROTHY CANFIELD

DOROTHY CANFIELD FISHER

(1879-)

Dorothy Canfield Fisher is one of our leading women writers. Her work is careful and sincere, and reflects throughout the fine character and high ideals of the author.

Mrs. Fisher has lived a rich, wholesome existence, and has made full use of the gifts with which she is endowed. As teacher, mother, educator, war-worker, she brings to all of her undertakings a zest and efficiency that insures success.

Born in Lawrence, Kansas, the daughter of a college president and an artist mother, Dorothy Canfield had the happy privilege of growing up in a broad mental environment. Travel abroad with her mother supplemented it with a more cosmopolitan experience.

She received her degree of Ph.B. from Ohio State University, of which her father was then president. She afterward continued her studies at Columbia University, where her father had accepted the post of librarian; and there she was granted a Ph.D. for her work in Romance languages.

In 1907 Dorothy Canfield married John Redwood Fisher, critic and writer. They are the parents of two children, and live on a little farm in Vermont when they are in this country.

In 1915, Mr. Fisher joined an ambulance corps in France, and Mrs. Fisher soon followed him there with their children. While the children attended school in Paris, their mother engaged in war work and ran, almost entirely unaided, the work for soldiers blinded in battle. She edited a magazine for them, ran the presses, and got books written meanwhile looking out for refugee and personal cases that came to her attention. Many children from the evacuated regions of France were cared for by her. Then, dropping this work, Mrs. Fisher devoted her time to running a camp on the edge of the war zone, and was organizer of a number of important activities. The results of her war experiences are reflected in her book, "Home Fires in France," one of the finest things she has written.

At the close of the war Mrs. Fisher organized at the foot of the Pyrenees a Red Cross hospital for children from the evacuated regions. In these surroundings, she acquired the knowledge of the Basque country which she has so delightfully utilized in some of her recent short stories.

Although it is with her fiction that we are here concerned, it must be stated that the ablest work of this accomplished woman has been in the field of child welfare.

Other short stories of Dorothy Canfield Fisher:

Old Man Warner	At the Sign of the Three Daughters
Uncle Ellis	Here Was Magic
Uncle Giles	Cage
What goes Up	Mr. Rooster Rebels
Colonel Shays	

A BASQUE WINDFALL

Up the steep slope to Masparren toiled an automobile; and this was remarkable for Masparren lies five hundred feet high in the Pyrenees, is geographically fifteen miles from a railroad and spiritually two centuries from the modern world and does all of its business by ox-cart. The only contact with the twentieth century known to that region is through the occasional departure of one of the poorest Basque boys, starved out, who emigrates to South America; and through the very infrequent return of one years later either as a ragged failure or as a pot-bellied well-to-do man in store clothes and suspenders accompanied by a heathenish wife with a hat on her head. (Any true Basque woman used to covering her sleek black hair with a mantilla would as soon go out on the street in her chemise as in a hat. And no Basque mountaineer, his lean agile body sashed in red, ever gets enough to eat or can stop work long enough to acquire corpulence.)

Unless they come back to visit their old homes the emigrants are seldom heard of after their departure. People poor enough to be driven to emigrate can rarely read and write. Even if they could their

families could not read their letters. For the most part they disappear forever, the handsome olive-skinned young men who despairing at the grinding narrowness of the lives before them pluck up courage to take the plunge and hiding their homesick panic under a pale bravado of gayety set off down the long stony road leading to St. Jean-de-Luz and the railroad.

But of course one never knows, this car might be bringing a returned "American" as the Basques who have lived in Argentine are always called. What other possible reason could an automobile have for coming to Masparren? The little boys in blue berets playing pelota up against the wall of the church halted their nimble sandaled feet and stared at the strange vehicle panting into the far end of the village street. The girls drawing water at the fountain stopped their chatter and turned their long lustrous eyes toward it in wonder.

The automobile turned the one corner of the street and stopped short, stalling with a grunt of astonishment, for it found itself in an impasse, low white-washed red-beamed houses before it, set thick all around a small public square of beaten earth shaded by pollarded plane-trees. There was no way out between the houses, not even an alleyway. Masparren is at the end of the road and does not mind admitting it.

The door of the car opened and a man stepped out, instantly known by all the Basque eyes looking at him to be not a Basque because of the stiff leather shoes on his feet and his stiff wooden-legged city-dweller's gait. He looked about him, saw that one of the houses announced by a faded sign that it was both the city hall and the public school and, stumping over to it, knocked on its door.

The elderly school-teacher who was also the town clerk had like everybody else in town been staring from a window at the automobile and now lost no time in opening the door. The stranger stepped in and introduced himself as a lawyer from St. Jean-de-Luz come to get some legal information from the town records of Masparren. The two men sat down together after the town clerk had shut the upper half of a door at the back of his office, through which a too friendly cow was thrusting a pretty head. The questioning began. Was anything known in Masparren about the Yturbe and the Haratz families?

Yes, everything was known about them—two landless, moneyless, unimportant clans, not very bright, not very honest, not very clean, not very industrious, good-natured, easy-going, with never a penny's worth of property among them and extremely prolific as such clans are apt to be the world around. They were not bad people, seldom got into prison for anything and were rather convenient to have around as they furnished the necessary hired men and domestic servants for other people with more energy and brains. They were in short the kind of people who, since the fantastic invention of universal suffrage, can be counted on to vote for the candidate with the loudest voice.

The lawyer from St. Jean-de-Luz listened attentively to this piece of town lore and asked if two of the grandmothers in the clan had not been sisters?

Yes, that was true; two Bidaranty girls they had been, from a scrub family exactly like the ones they had married into. Yes, they were both still living although very old now. There was one, now this minute, over across the square. The lawyer turned

in his chair, settled his glasses on his nose and looked hard through the window at an old crone, her head tied up in a rusty black handkerchief, creeping feebly about, stooping to pick up fallen twigs and putting them in a gunny-sack which she dragged along with one hand. That was Granny Haratz, about seventy-seven now, useful for gathering fuel for the cooking-fire and for nothing else. Her sister, Grandmother Yturbe, spent her time in the pastures watching the cows to see that they did not wander, the usual work given to members of the community whose time was worth nothing.

And had those sisters ever had a brother?

Ah, that the town clerk did not know. He was a newcomer to Masparren having lived there only thirty-seven years. But the town records would show. They did. Yes, there had been an elder brother, Jean Manuel Bidaranty, who sixty-two years ago at the age of nineteen had gone to South America. Here was the record of his birth, his baptism, all the data about his securing his passport.

The lawyer pulled from his black leather portfolio a packet of documents, compared names, dates, ages. Evidently, he remarked after a time, evidently the same man.

He folded his documents together and returned them to his portfolio, remarking that he had just received word from a lawyer in Buenos Aires that Monsieur Bidaranty was dead.

How strange, thought the town clerk, to hear one of such a tribe as the Bidarantys called a "monsieur."

The lawyer went on to say that, dying, Monsieur Bidaranty had willed what property he had to his two sisters. Now that the identification was complete there were only some legal formalities to be

finished. They would take perhaps a month . . . perhaps two . . . possibly as long as three. Inheritances were long in getting themselves settled. And then he would transfer the property to the two heiresses.

The town clerk had listened to this open-mouthed, his eyes wider and wilder with every breath he drew. He now asked in a faint voice if it would be indiscreet to inquire whether Monsieur Bidaranty had left much?

No, the lawyer told him, it would not be in the least indiscreet. No secret about it. Quite a tidy little sum. About three million dollars.

He reached for his hat and stepped toward the door.

The town clerk sat stricken, numb to his marrow.

"Good day," said the lawyer pleasantly, opening the door, "and many thanks for your assistance."

He stepped out.

The town clerk came to life with a convulsive shudder and cried after him in a crackled voice, "Did you say dollars? Or francs?"

"Dollars," said the lawyer conversationally and stepping into his car disappeared.

The town clerk never was the same man again from that moment.

Masparren reeled from the shock. The news flared up and down the narrow valley like fire in dry weeds; and in a twinkling burned away a number of false ideas about the Yturbe and Haratz families. Everybody saw now what he had not chanced to note before, that the Yturbes had great natural distinction of manner and that the younger Haratz girls had wonderful hair and eyes.

Everybody remembered what respected citizens of

the town they had always been and there was a universal feeling among the better people of town that it was not suitable for members of such good old Basque families to be in menial positions. Generous old friends whose fathers had been the intimate friends of their fathers rushed to help them out of their temporary difficulties. Before long one of the grandsons was taken into partnership by the village grocer.

Three of the granddaughters, buxom servant girls, were sought in marriage by sons of well-to-do farmers who worked their own land and owned many head of cattle. Another grandson who had been stableboy for the doctor in the next town, the doctor who had once been almost elected to the Chamber of Deputies, was taken into the doctor's family on the most familiar terms and was already a great favorite with the doctor's marriageable daughter. An Yturbe boy! Think of it!

The two old ladies, now dressed in shining black silk presented to them by friendly neighbors, were removed from the earth-floored huts in which they had always lived and borne their numerous children, into salubrious new quarters in an elegantly furnished house with sheets on the beds, wax-flowers in glass bells on the mantelpieces and actually, almost the only one in the village, a cast-iron two-holed cook-stove in the kitchen. Of course the bewildered docile old women never did any cooking on the stove, the fire on the hearth being so much handier.

This house was thrown open to them in a burst of humanity by the only landed proprietor thereabouts, a wealthy magnate who owned four of the houses in town and had three farms to rent. He was on

the point of settling rent-free on one of his farms a widowed daughter of Madame Yturbe when a sudden thought struck him, waking him up in the night, piercing to his vitals.

By dawn the next morning his son, a well-to-do horse-trader as shrewd as himself, was dispatched down the road to St. Jean-de-Luz with instructions to see that lawyer in person and find out the truth about this wild story which after all, as the proprietor had suddenly remembered, rested on nothing more than the uncorroborated say-so of the town clerk who, judging from the state of extreme agitation in which he had been found after the visit of the lawyer, might easily have misunderstood the whole business.

The horse-dealer left at six one morning. By nine, everybody in the village (with the natural exception of the Yturbe and Haratz families) knew why he had gone. They were all shuddering at the danger they had unwittingly been in and were thanking Providence that they had for townsman so sagacious a person as the proprietor. During the two days of his son's absence, the village went into a trance of suspended animation.

On the evening of his arrival the village notables assembled at his house to hear his report. It threw them into a veritable ague. He had not, it is true, been able to see the lawyer who was away from his office and would not be back for a fortnight more. And, shrewd son of a worldly-wise father, he had been far too knowing to confide in a mere jackanapes of a lawyer's clerk. But he had heard . . . what had he not heard!

All St. Jean-de-Luz was talking of it. He had heard from everybody that the whole story was a

hoax, an infamous practical joke. Jean Manuel Bidaranty had returned from South America years ago, a poor vagabond like all the other Bidarantys, had earned a scanty living in a fishing village farther up the coast and when he died had not left enough money to bury him. Everybody knew all the details of the true story . . . had heard in just which cemetery his poor wooden cross was to be found, had been told the full name of the fisherman who had employed him. Three million dollars nothing! Of all the preposterous tales! Nobody but simple-minded, backwoods rustics would have believed for an instant such a preposterous story.

The assemblage of village notables, headed by the almost-Deputy himself, who had gathered to hear the news, turned with one accord to rush out and denounce the wretched impostors. But the proprietor called them back in an agonized voice. They had no more proof of this last story than of the first. Suppose the Yturbes and Haratz families were not wretched impostors at all but really valid heirs to three million dollars. It would not do to be in too great haste.

The story did sound madly impossible and thanks be to God and all the saints there was still time to draw back. But *suppose it should be true!*

The group of notables glared upon each other with tortured faces. Superior upper-class people as they were, they expected as a matter of course to dominate any situation in which they found themselves and to extract from it whatever profit there might be, naturally the due of the refined and cultivated. But this situation . . . ! Until the lawyer came back, what would be safe for them to do? To do? How could they even know what to feel,

utterly at sea as they were with no data on which an intelligent person could form a judgment.

Were those Haratz girls really handsome or were they common slatterns? Were the Yturbe boys promising lads or the scum of the earth? How could anybody know? Were ever human beings put into so hideous a situation as the townspeople of those two families?

Shut into this suspense, in the intolerable position of having nobody to blame, their nerves gave way and they turned on each other. Before that first meeting had broken up they had begun to quarrel fiercely, twitting each other with old scandals, raking up forgotten family skeletons which by the customary conspiracy of silence among gentry had been kept dark lest the lower classes learn of them. Their exasperation found a real relief in this wrangling which after the fashion of wrangling rose in intensity and fury from day to day. What else could they do to fill those long slow days of waiting, slow as in a nightmare.

The apoplectic landed proprietor, meeting "Madame Haratz" in her black silk dress on the street, put up his hand to doff his hat to her, snatched it down again indignantly, put it up again falteringly and glared upon her in an uncertainty so tragic that he felt something give way in his brain and fell to the ground in the first of the paralytic seizures which finally carried him off.

Everybody was as tense as a fiddle-string. If wheels sounded in the street everyone leaped to his window and was enraged to see that it was only the miller with an ox-cart loaded with bags of rye.

Even in their confusion, however, there was one thing which was almost at once obvious to them all.

Whatever happened they could prevent the others from exploiting those dumb ignorant peasants. They were revolted by each other's sordid calculations. Secretly one by one they went to warn the Yturbe and Haratz families. It was a Christian duty, they told Madame Haratz, to let her know that the doctor's mother had died in an insane asylum and that the doctor often showed signs of the same malady, homicidal mania. Did Madame Yturbe perhaps know that the proprietor of their house had been accused of poisoning his first wife? And did the Haratz girls know that the young men who had shown such mercenary haste in seeking them out after it was known they were heiresses were not all they should be . . . were drunkards . . . thieves . . . had illegitimate families in other villages . . . had served terms in prison . . . walked in their sleep. And had the Yturbes happened to hear that it was the persecutions of the grocer which had driven his former partner to suicide?

To these revelations of the criminal, diseased and depraved character of their neighbors the Yturbe and Haratz families listened open-mouthed, pale-cheeked, credulous, panic-struck. They doubted not a word of it. It fell in perfectly with their conception of life founded on tremulous notions of witchcraft and black art. Never, never had they dreamed that the people around them were so dangerous, so savage, so adroit . . . but now that they knew it, it seemed quite understandable.

They held a council of their own at night behind locked doors, cowering together, starting at every sound, constantly sending one of the boys to make sure no one was listening at the windows. What could they do? How could they escape from the

perils around them? How could they, poor, ignorant, bewildered, helpless folk as they were, hold their own against these upper-class, highly educated assassins, crooks, robbers and maniacs who surrounded them as they had all seen a flock of sheep surrounded by wolves.

The idea of resistance did not cross their minds. Never in the memory of man had any one of them been able to defend himself against property-owners, who could read and write and cipher and knew how to get the law on you if you didn't do as they wished. Open resistance would not have the faintest shadow of success. And even if fighting could have saved them there was not a drop of fighting blood in the lot of them.

But . . . like an inspiration it came to them . . . there are other ways of escape for creatures who dare not fight. With a huddled sheep-like rush, once the idea was conceived, they made their plans. The night was a dark one. There were plenty of strong arms to carry the children. They could be far, far on their way before dawn. For at least twenty-four hours, perhaps longer, no one could guess where to look for them. And it would take a good day after that to find them. Fifteen miles, while long and hard for the soft feet of well-to-do folk, does not seem far to people used to work hard for their livings. And it was all down hill to St. Jean-de-Luz.

Four days later the son of the proprietor once more came back from a trip to St. Jean-de-Luz. He was gray with fury. They had gone. The whole tribe. To Buenos Aires. To where Jean Manuel had lived. They had found the lawyer just returned to his office and had asked him, so he said, if they had the right to go? If there was money enough to pay

for their tickets? If anyone could get the law on them if they did go? The lawyer had bought their tickets for them and helped them get off. After all, why not, he had said impudently to the man from Masparren, if that was what they wanted?

No, it had not been a hoax about the money. All solid fact. Just as the lawyer had said at first. Incredible. True.

QUESTIONS

1. Note how the author, by use of few words, still conveys a great deal of information about the lives and surroundings of the Basque mountaineers. In your own words give a detailed description of the country, customs, and inhabitants as you have gained knowledge of them from the author's briefer descriptions.
2. Do you consider that Dorothy Canfield has or has not been too sparing in her use of descriptive material?
3. In what light does a city dweller appear to the eyes of the citizens of Masparren? What details convey this?
4. Mention traits which these Basques, in spite of their isolation, have in common with more worldly persons.
5. What is the social status in Masparren of the Haratz and Yturbe families?
6. How does their sudden good fortune affect their standing in the community?
7. Explain the dilemma in which the villagers found themselves, once doubt entered their minds.
8. What is the effect upon the Yturbes and the Haratzes of the turmoil which beset the villagers?
9. Where did Dorothy Canfield get her material for this story?
10. Wherein lies its main interest?
11. Explain the meaning of the following words as used by the author: homicidal, ague, prolific, salubrious, apoplectic, preposterous, animation, gentry, sagacious, docile.
12. What was the effect upon you of the dénouement? Were you surprised, disappointed, or amused?

THE LOST SPEECH
BY
HONORÉ WILLSIE MORROW

HONORÉ WILLISIE MORROW

"The Lost Speech," by Honoré Willsie Morrow, is one of the best stories of its kind ever written. Here are interesting facts of history in the life of Abraham Lincoln not found in any school book, because no historian has taken the opportunity to give us so carefully a personal insight into the early years of Lincoln's career as has Mrs. Morrow.

Born in Ottumwa, Iowa, the daughter of William Dunbar McCue and Lilly Bryant McCue, who were New England pioneers in the West, Mrs. Morrow has the natural endowment of a thorough knowledge of the life and spirit of the times of which she writes. She was graduated from the University of Wisconsin with an A.B. degree, and soon after married Mr. Willsie. With her husband, she came to New York to devote herself to writing. She met and struggled against the usual difficulties, but succeeded in selling some short stories to the *Delineator*. Theodore Dreiser, then editor of that magazine, offered her a position on the staff, but this offer she declined for the reason that she wished to write "what she wanted, when she wanted."

And so she says, "I kept on writing. I bought a second-hand typewriter and worked it with two fingers, many times thinking of the salary I might have had coming in every week. As Mr. Dreiser said, it wasn't easy. I made five hundred dollars the first year. Things began to come my way finally, because I stuck to my plan and always kept my eye on the future and had the courage to refuse that job."

A year or two later her stories began to appear in the leading magazines. They were extremely popular and it was apparent that a new woman writer was to be added to the list of American authors.

Her versatility was recognized a little later when she changed from fiction to special articles, treating three great topics—divorce, immigration, and Indians—in a humane and intelligent manner.

In 1913 appeared Mrs. Willsie's first novel, "The Heart of the Desert." Her fame as an author was now secure. In 1914 she was made editor of the *Delineator*, and held that position for five years, when she decided to give up executive work in order to write.

Mrs. Willsie has married again and writes under the name of Honoré Willsie Morrow. Her work maintains a uniformly high level; "The Lost Speech" was declared by the present editor of the *Delineator* to be the best story published in that magazine in 1925. The year before her story, "Fighting Blood," had received similar honor.

THE LOST SPEECH

I

On May 29, 1856, very early in the morning, Rose Franklin walked up the chief thoroughfare of Bloomington, Illinois, with her small brother dragging on her hand. In her gray silk frock, with its crinoline-distended skirt, Rose was an imposing figure. She was so imposing, in fact, that even when the fragrant May wind had not wrapped him in the folds of his sister's billowing skirt young Bodie was almost imperceptible to the naked eye. And young Bodie was not without his own splendors, for he wore a velvet suit and a stiff hat with long streamers, and was eight years old and had a classic perfection of feature. He looked like his fair-haired mother, who had died at his birth.

Rose, however, looked like Ichabod Franklin, the father of the two. And Ichabod had a dwarfing effect on nearly everyone but his daughter. She was twenty-eight, with her father's intelligent brown eyes and her father's intelligent forehead, only partially concealed by the parted hair waving on either side of it. She carried her head a little forward, like Ichabod, and only recurrent dimples at the corners of her lips prevented her slender mouth from being too firm, like Ichabod's. Her shoulders were broad and straight—so broad that, contrasted with them

and with the undulating crinoline, her waist was of astounding slimness.

She was, to quote her father, who was noted for a curious jealous devotion to her, "a splendid-looking woman, though too large for most men's taste, thank heaven!" Not every man's taste, however. Among her father's political friends and enemies there were half a dozen men who would have been glad to marry Rose Franklin—Rose, splendid in mind as well as in body.

She moved slowly along the street, looking about her with interest, until Bodie pulled impatiently at her hand. "Rose, I'm hungry. My stomach feels naked."

"Don't whine," said Rose. "You insisted on seeing the town before breakfast."

"But the town's awful long for such a little town, and I thought it wouldn't take you so long to dress, and—"

"Good heavens, Bodie! If it is as serious as all that, we'll go directly back to breakfast."

"There's Father now on the hotel steps," said the boy. "Look, Rose; there's a man with him that's taller than he is. I thought Father was the tallest man in the world."

"That's Mr. Lincoln. I'm glad he's come!" exclaimed Rose, quickening her pace. "I want to ask him something."

"Who's Mr. Lincoln?" whined Bodie. "I can't go so fast; it makes my stomach growl. I wish my legs were as long as yours."

"Mr. Lincoln's a friend of Father's." Rose's voice was patient. "He's only a country lawyer, but he's a very smart politician and you must be polite to him."

"I wish Father was a politician instead of just an editor; then he'd have his picture in the paper like —" began Bodie.

But Rose was not heeding the child. She again quickened her pace as her father turned into the hotel and Mr. Lincoln moved slowly down the steps.

"Mr. Lincoln!" she called.

The tall man paused as Rose came up, a little breathlessly. He removed his high hat and smiled.

"If the Illinois Central had your speed, Miss Rose, that Chicago Special wouldn't be two hours late this morning."

The dimples flashed at the corners of Rose's mouth. "Poor Bodie finds my speed much less enjoyable than train speed."

Mr. Lincoln looked down at the panting youngster. "So this is Ichabod's boy! Nice suit you've got, son."

"Velvet!" snarled Bodie with the startling effect of an oath. "Wish I was dead!"

Lincoln chuckled, dug a copper from his pocket, and handed it to Bodie. "Get yourself some horehound drops, son, and forget your clothes. That's my method."

Bodie took the copper and flew along the street to a grocery store whose proprietor was just opening his door for the day. Rose spoke in a low voice.

"Mr. Lincoln, has Father said anything to you of the trouble between him and Owen Bashford?"

The lawyer shook his head. "No. Of course I know they're always fighting each other through their two papers."

"It's worse than that now!" exclaimed Rose. "Day before yesterday in Chicago there was an indigna-

tion meeting of citizens over the attack in the Senate on Charles Sumner—surely, Mr. Lincoln, Congressman Brooks will be punished for that?”

Mr. Lincoln looked troubled. He shook his great head slowly. “It’s hard to tell. Sumner himself will be the best judge of that, when he recovers from the beating—if he ever does. Adequate punishment of Brooks might set the whole South on fire.”

“Let it!” exclaimed Rose, her dark eyes flashing. Then she returned to the object of her interview. “That was a wild meeting, Mr. Lincoln. Father and Owen Bashford led opposing sides. Father was for forbidding any member of the Democratic Party who did not declare himself against Brooks to come to this anti-Nebraskan convention. That made Owen furious, and their arguing really broke up the meeting.”

Mr. Lincoln nodded. “Your father has been talking to me of the same thing, but he didn’t speak of Owen with particularity, knowing, of course, how fond I am of the boy. I think I’ve beguiled your father from the thought of bringing up the Brooks attack at the convention to-day. This is a convention to unite all parties on a stand against slavery. The whole point of the gathering is to avoid a party strife. I think your father sees that now.” The lawyer looked at Rose keenly, but with a little smile. “Does that remove your fears?”

“It—it at least makes me hopeful,” replied Rose. “I—I hesitate to say it, but you will understand, I’m sure. I can’t help thinking that, almost unconsciously to himself, Father’s intense feeling against Owen’s politics has been stirred up mostly by the friendship between Owen and me. I don’t think

that even if Owen turned Whig—which he never will—Father would soften toward him.”

“We’ll turn both Owen and your father into this new party, the Republican Party. It’s a good name.”

“If we only could!” exclaimed Rose. “But so far their differences are irreconcilable.”

“And a reconciliation would mean a great deal to you, Miss Rose?” asked Lincoln gently.

Rose met his deep-set gaze squarely. “Yes, Mr. Lincoln!” Then she added with a sudden, almost childish trembling of her delicate lips: “But I’ve almost given up hope.”

“Oh, don’t say that!” cried Mr. Lincoln. “You are too young to say that. Leave hopelessness to old fellows like me.”

“You! Why, Mr. Lincoln, we all feel that you are just beginning your career. I’m expecting to address you as Senator Lincoln in the not distant future.”

Lincoln shook his head slowly, but before he could speak Bodie ran up, a long brown stick of candy protruding from his mouth. His nose had been bleeding.

“I had a fight with the grocer’s boy,” he explained thickly. “He said that these were girls’ pants. After the fight his father gave me three sticks of horehound for the penny.”

Mr. Lincoln laughed delightedly. “And then what happened?”

“Oh, him and me are going fishing, if Rose will let me.”

Rose smiled as she took the grimy little hand in hers. “Let’s have breakfast first. Will you not share it with us, Mr. Lincoln?”

“Oh, I ate an hour ago!” replied the lawyer. “I’ll

see you later." He swung into his long stride down the street, and Rose led her little brother into the dining-room of the hotel.

Ichabod Franklin was sitting alone at a small table. He was writing on a reporter's pad and did not look up until Rose and Bodie had finished eating their corn-meal mush. Then he raised his head and gazed at Rose abstractedly. His was a heavily masculinized edition of his daughter's head, the black hair shot with gray, a deep line extending from the corner of either nostril to the corners of his mouth.

"Chicago train is late, I hear," he said. "I'm glad we came down last night."

Rose nodded. Bodie looked at his father without speaking. It was characteristic of the relations between the two that the little boy did not mention the fight that he had boasted of to his sister.

"Is Mr. Lincoln going to speak to-day?" asked Rose.

"No. He said there were so many other speakers he wouldn't be needed. I think he's wise. He's a good country lawyer, but as a politician he lacks polish. He wouldn't get far with the sort of men who are coming to the convention."

Rose moved impatiently. "You underestimate Mr. Lincoln, Father."

"Not at all. There's no man in Illinois I like more or have a higher opinion of in an advisory capacity. But he's been trying to get somewhere politically for a long time and he's never got anywhere. He's too easy-going."

"Yet you take his political advice! Father, he has a great character."

"Pshaw! More of your unaccountable hero wor-

ship," returned her father irritably. "Bodie, leave the table, sir."

Bodie, who had been quietly concentrating on measuring the capacity of his mouth by ascertaining the amount of biscuit he could cram into it, jumped so hastily from his chair that he choked and deposited the mouthful of biscuit on his father's black broadcloth sleeve. Ichabod Franklin's temper flared. He sprang to his feet with an oath that paralyzed traffic in the dining-room, seized Bodie by the ear, and led him from the room. Rose stared after them, scarlet-faced, then with obvious effort went on with her coffee.

Ichabod returned shortly. "You spoil that brat, Rose," he snarled.

"He has no mother," replied Rose in a low voice. "He hasn't even the memory of her, as I have. She would have been gentle with him. The thing that I fear is that, looking so much like you, I may as I grow older develop your irascible disposition too. If that should happen, life would be a pretty unhappy affair for Bodie."

Ichabod stared at Rose, the great veins on his forehead swelling. "You are impertinent, madam."

"No, Father! Pardon me! I'm twenty-eight and merely losing the capacity for hero worship you accuse me of. You'll never have a more ardent admirer of yourself as a great newspaper editor than I am. But—"

"But what?" snapped Ichabod.

"But you are letting your irritability hamper your career. And you are making a little boy unhappy."

"Owen Bashford, on the other hand," growled Ichabod, "is a paragon of sweet temper."

"He's even-tempered when he doesn't discuss poli-

tics with you," returned Rose. "What did you do with Bodie, Father?"

"I sent him to his room. Don't go up there and coddle him. But take that velvet suit off the boy as soon as you possibly can. He looks like a girl!"

The dimples appeared at the corners of Rose's mouth as she thought of Mr. Lincoln's genial appraisal of Bodie's suit, which, enhancing the boy's beauty as it did, she hadn't the slightest intention of discarding. But before she could reply to her father there was a commotion in the lobby and a group of frock-coated men filed into the dining-room. The Chicago train had arrived. Ichabod Franklin scanned the entering faces eagerly.

"They're all here, by Jove! This is throwing down the gauntlet to Douglas with a vengeance! And there's some of the State crowd—Selby and Davis and ex-Governor Reeder!"

The editor rose with a fine smile illuminating his brown eyes, and the entering delegates surged toward him. Ichabod was the rallying point for the Illinois Whigs, and men gladly recognized this while shrugging their shoulders at his distempers. In a moment tables had been shoved up to lengthen the Franklin table and ten or twelve men were calling for breakfast while they answered Ichabod's staccato fusillade of questions.

"Where is Owen Bashford?" asked Rose. "Oh, there he is!" answering her own question, as a tall, slender man of perhaps thirty-five appeared in the door. Impulsively Rose beckoned to him. Owen advanced smiling. He was as fair as Bodie, but with a hawklike aquilinity of feature. His eyes, very blue and very intelligent, were fastened on Rose.

"How are you, Rose?" he asked, shaking hands.

"Sit down, Bashford!" cried the delegate from Jacksonville. "Room for one more!"

"One moment, please!" exclaimed Ichabod. "Bashford, have you decided to repudiate Brooks and declare that the attack was inexcusable?"

"Franklin," exclaimed a man with a white beard, "I beg of you, let that matter drop! You are jeopardizing a very great affair by your attitude. We all know Bashford's stand against slavery and we all recognize the enormous influence of his newspaper. We need him at this convention."

Rose, with a little nod of approval, turned to Bashford with a deep, tender look. Ichabod saw that look and brought his fist down on the table.

"Gentlemen, I await the courtesy of a reply from Mr. Bashford."

Owen lifted his chin a little. He spoke with a slight drawl, for which his Virginia mother may have been responsible.

"Charles Sumner practically called Brooks's uncle a skunk in a speech that was filled with studied insult for all the Southern Congressmen. It was a speech containing more exquisite indelicacies than any that Sumner, with all his proficiency in that line, has ever attempted before. Sumner deserved punishment, but Brooks's methods were unfair and too rough. Both men should apologize—Brooks for the brutality of his arm and Sumner for the brutality of his tongue."

Again Rose nodded, and as again Ichabod saw the approbation in his daughter's face he arose, leaned across the little table that separated him from Owen, and struck him on the chin. It was a heavy blow. For a moment there was utter silence in the dining-room. Even the waitresses, with their noisy movements of raw country girls, were still.

It was Owen Bashford who broke the silence. "But, Mr. Franklin," he drawled, "this puts you in the class with Brooks, does it not?"

"Come out and fight, you hybrid Democrat, you!" shouted Ichabod.

Half a dozen hands seized him as he lunged at the motionless Owen. Rose, now on her feet, looked wildly from her father's face to Owen's. She knew that it was her presence beside the younger editor which was driving her father to this unprecedented excess, but she hesitated to seem to run away. It was Bodie who offered her a solution. A chambermaid who had not witnessed the episode hurried up to Rose.

"Your little brother's yelling bloody murder for you," she said in a whisper that carried across the dining-room. "He's disturbing all the folks that ain't out of bed yet."

II

Rose turned quickly from the embattled breakfast table and made her way up to Bodie's room. The little boy was sitting on the edge of the bed, howling with all the abandon of a disconsolate puppy. Rose closed the door after her, and taking Bodie's hand she led him to a rocking-chair beside the window. She caught a towel from the washstand as she passed. Bodie, big boy that he was, snuggled gratefully in her lap when she seated herself and began gently to wipe his face.

"There, dear! Feel better?" she asked.

"How would you feel if your ear had been pulled out by the roots! I hate him, the old black pirate!"

"No, no, no, Bodie! You must not speak so of him. He's your father."

The child's chin quivered. "Well, he never pulled your ear. You said Mother wouldn't let him. The great big old bully, picking on a little boy! How did I know the old biscuits would fly that way? I had a right to see how much I could chew at once, didn't I? Aren't my teeth mine, either?"

Rose gathered the boy to her shoulder, rested her cheek against his hair, and began to rock.

"Mother loved him, Bodie—oh, so much! She looked on his temper as his affliction, as heart disease would be or consumption. You look very like her. I suppose every time he sees you he's reminded over again of his terrible loss. For he'll never get over missing her. Just think! He's the greatest editor west of the Alleghenies, and she will never, never know it! Poor Father!"

Bodie was tall and precocious for eight, yet he snuffled like a very little boy. "Tell me some more," he said huskily. "It makes my throat stop aching."

"When I was little like you," Rose went on, "Father lost his temper with me, and Mother came into the room just as he was going to whip me. And Mother just put her hand on his arm and said, 'Icha-bod, you are ill again.' And Father dropped his cane and stared at her, and finally he said, 'Yes, Isabel, God forgive me, I'm ill again!' You see, Bodie, when God took her away He took from Father his very mainstay."

The child did not speak for a moment; then he asked: "Why did God take her away?"

"I don't know, unless He thought life was too hard for her. She was not strong."

"You're like Mother, Rose, aren't you?"

"No, I'm like Father, only so far I've had enough of Mother's strength to make me able to fight down

my temper. You are like Mother. You see, Bodie, Father has tremendous cares on his shoulders. America is in trouble."

The boy sat erect. "America's in trouble? What do you mean, Rose?"

Rose looked at her small brother thoughtfully. "I don't think I can make you understand it all, Bodie. But men like Father and Mr. Lincoln and Mr. Bashford are afraid that the North and the South will quarrel so over slavery that America will be hurt, terribly hurt—perhaps fall apart, like a house shaken by an earthquake. Father—your own father, Bodie—got the idea of calling together several hundred men in Illinois who love America as he does and who don't want slavery and who can make their neighbors think as they do. He wants them to form a huge party to fight against slavery and to keep America from falling apart. And that's why we have come down from Chicago, and why all those splendid men have come to Bloomington, to carry out Father's idea. His idea might save the nation if enough States took it up. Think of that, Bodie! Poor crazy-tempered Father!"

Bodie stared out the open window. It was prairie spring without. The street on which the hotel was set ended in endless prairie green—green and still more green. The heavenly scent of it poured in through the window.

"That's America out there, isn't it, Rose?" asked Bodie.

"Yes, hundreds of thousands of miles of it. And Father carries on his shoulders the weight of thinking that he must save it. That's rather wonderful, isn't it, little Bodie?"

As the child nodded silently, there came a rap on

the door. "Come in," called Rose. The door swung open, disclosing Mr. Lincoln and Ichabod Franklin on the threshold. Ichabod stared at the two in the rocking-chair, but before his elders could speak the little boy slid from his sister's knee and went quickly up to his father, holding out his hand.

"You see, Father," he said clearly, "I didn't understand until Rose explained. You can twist my ear all you want to if it will help you to bear America's troubles."

Ichabod looked at Rose in utter bewilderment. She spoke quickly.

"You've forgotten, Father, that you punished him for coughing all over your coat."

"Oh, I remember clearly enough now. Don't let it happen again, sir."

Rose thrust Bodie toward the door. "You can go over and play with the grocer's boy until I call for you, Bodie."

Mr. Lincoln spoke for the first time. "In the handsome velvet suit?"

"I'm not going to take it off for him!" replied Bodie. "I've got him licked." He bolted from the room.

"Mr. Lincoln wants to talk to you, Rose," said Ichabod abruptly. "I've told them to keep the little parlor at the end of the hall clear for you."

Rose moved toward the door. "You are coming with us, Father?"

"No, I have other matters—in my room."

Rose led the way to the parlor, her face filled with anxiety. Mr. Lincoln seated her, and then walked slowly up and down the room. "Miss Rose, how did you beguile that little boy into an apology?"

"I didn't want him to apologize, Mr. Lincoln. I

wanted him to forgive. I want Bodie not to have an unhappy childhood, and—and—he's growing to hate Father. So I've explained to him the very big things Father is doing."

The lawyer nodded. "You did a good job. I remember your mother. She had that same power,—Miss Rose; you'll have to use it again,—I think. Your father by his action to Bashford just now has roused all the partisan bitterness that we'd hoped to dissolve by this convention. He's hurt his leadership so that some of the best men say they won't stay to be led by a man who could say and do what he did to Owen Bashford. It's very bad! Miss Rose,—this convention must not fail."

"What can I do?" asked Rose.

"I hesitate to ask you. But from what you told me yourself, and from what your father's friends and yours tell me, I must believe that much of Ichabod's enmity toward Owen is based on his jealousy of your friendship for Owen. If your father could receive a promise from you that you would give up Owen—"

Mr. Lincoln paused. Rose whitened. "You are asking me to make Father a promise that— Mr. Lincoln, does Owen know of this?"

"No," said the lawyer. "Neither your father nor Owen knows. But if you make that promise I shall ask them to abide by it."

Rose drew herself slowly from her chair and stood facing Mr. Lincoln. The lawyer, preoccupied as he was, gave her a glance of appreciation. She was, indeed, a splendid-looking woman: her massive head, her broad shoulders, her slender waist, her sweeping skirts. Here was a presence, he thought, that royalty might envy. She twisted her hands together until the knuckles cracked.

"It's too much," she said breathlessly. "That I cannot do."

"You are very sure, Miss Rose? Take time. It's a momentous decision. The fate of the nation may hinge on this convention."

"It's too much," repeated Rose. "I haven't Bodie's forgiving disposition. Friendship after friendship his temper or his jealousy has broken. This—this feeling between Owen and me—Mr. Lincoln, did you—no, you never could have felt toward any woman as I do toward Owen, or you would not ask me to destroy that feeling."

Mr. Lincoln's face suddenly became livid. "You can say that? Although it was common talk that I almost lost my mind when Ann Rutledge was laid in her grave! Do I not know?"

"And would you have given her up for such a reason?" cried Rose.

Lincoln turned his gaunt face toward the window, and again Rose followed another's gaze out to the green of the prairies that pressed upon the little town. Again she was conscious of the May wind drenched with the nameless sweetness of the plains.

"I don't know," replied the lawyer slowly. "I pray God that I could have, had the need arisen. And equally I thank Him that the choice was not forced upon me. And yet I'm counting on your strength, Miss Rose, and on your knowledge. No one in Illinois knows better than you the awful need of the hour."

"It's not fair! It's not right!" Rose's voice was as low as Mr. Lincoln's, but where his was sad hers was vehement. "Natures like my father's—that give to the world while they draw from their family like leeches! Must one give one's last drop of blood to them?"

"I think so," replied Mr. Lincoln carefully. "I have found it to be so."

"I cannot do it!" panted Rose, never raising her voice and never ceasing to twist her long, fine hands together.

"By sheer force of intellect," the quiet man went on, "your father has made himself the leader of the best minds in the West. Miss Rose, I am full of uneasy foreboding. Unless the men who are against slavery cease quarreling among themselves, we face national disaster. Your father must change his stand on Owen Bashford or he loses his leadership of this convention, and I know of no man who could take his place."

"You could take it, Mr. Lincoln!" exclaimed Rose.

"No. I haven't your father's education. And this is a convocation of the kind of men who are moved by the educated intellect."

Rose stared at the man, moved as she always was by his gentle persistence.

"But, Mr. Lincoln! To give up Owen! What of him, with his splendid brain and great promise of future leadership? Don't you know that what you are asking me to do will blast his life for years to come?"

"If his private griefs impair his sense of public duty, then he'd—"

Rose interrupted. "Then he's no better than my father, you would say! And I—I too am of the same kind!"

"Tarred with the same stick!" Mr. Lincoln smiled a little, but his searching gaze did not lift from Rose's face.

"But life must not do this to me!" breathlessly. "I am twenty-eight. And as far as I know, I have but the one life to live. Living with Father without my

mother has been one long punishment. I wanted Owen. Oh, I wanted him!”

The lawyer turned from his deep contemplation of the tragic face before him to gaze again upon the prairies. His own lips were quivering, but he did not speak.

“And Owen himself!” panted Rose. “The kind of man who would love me cannot do so lightly. And I am to crucify him then—”

Mr. Lincoln cleared his throat. “Do you know of any other appeal that would move Ichabod?”

Rose stood in silence looking back through the years, facing once for all what she had learned about bad temper in human beings. And she realized that no appeal to her father regarding his temper would move him. To Ichabod his loss of self-control was always righteous indignation. She stood silent so long that Mr. Lincoln began to pace the floor again. Rose spoke in a startled voice, as if she could not believe her own conclusion.

“I’ll see what I can do with Father.”

Mr. Lincoln came slowly toward her, his face flushed in sympathy with her pallor. “And having reached so great a decision, I know that you will carry it out with as much adroitness as you showed in handling Bodie. It’s not for me to thank you, Miss Rose; that’s in the hands of the God of nations. Only”—he placed a great hand on either of Rose’s shoulders—“will you not let me say that I have found that the only real satisfaction in one’s life comes, not from personal joys, but from— Ah, Miss Rose! Miss Rose! I know all that you are suffering. All!” He turned hastily away, picked up his high hat, and left the room.

III

Her father was seated at the table, dictating to his secretary. Rose crossed the room swiftly. She felt as if she had been running a long race. "Father, will you ask Arthur to leave us alone for a little while?"

Ichabod looked up impatiently. "This is important, Rose!"

"But this is more important. Don't defer hearing what I have to say, Father, please."

Ichabod with a little scowl nodded at his secretary, who left the room hastily. Rose sat down in his place opposite her father.

"Mr. Lincoln," she said, "has been talking to me about your position as leader of this convention, Father. He feels that you are the only man fitted to weld together the various factions. Of course many of us have known that for a long time, but it is a notable thing to have a man like Mr. Lincoln volunteer such a comment."

Ichabod stared at his daughter. "Is that what he was so insistent on seeing you about? He's an adroit politician. I wonder if Mark Antony is growing ambitious, and by some method of indirection—"

"No! No! You misjudge him indeed, Father! I asked him point-blank if he would pull the convention together. He seemed so worried about it. But he said no—that he lacked the educational qualifications you possess."

"Did he, indeed?" Ichabod looked thoughtful. "Well, he's right. I'm glad he recognizes his own limitations. Lincoln's first-rate on the Sangamon River and an extremely keen politician. But he's too coarse-fibred for large uses. What did he want of you, daughter?"

"Before I answer that, Father, let me ask you a question. Are you still worried lest internal quarrels break up the convention?"

"Still worried? Why, Rose, where's your usual acumen? I am distracted with fear lest the new party be stillborn. Didn't you understand this morning how they are going to use that cursed Sumner-Brooks episode?"

Rose bit her lips, then sat slowly erect. "I've been thinking, Father, that with so much at stake I shall withdraw my friendship for Owen Bashford. I do not know that it will force Owen to change his attitude, but at least it may make you feel—" She paused, astounded by the vivid light that leaped to her father's eyes.

Ichabod leaned across the table. "You will do that? You have that faith in the righteousness of my position?"

Rose nodded.

Her father sprang to his feet. "Rose! Rose! I feel as I've not felt since your mother was with me—that I have the vital backing of my own! Pshaw! I care little now whether Owen retracts his statements or not. With this knowledge of you behind me I can move mountains. Ah, Rose! Blood is thicker than water."

Rose was pale, and she did not move until she lifted her head to say, "But, Father, Owen has many backers. How will you satisfy them?"

"Oh, I shall withdraw my exactions. I shall be magnanimous."

Rose nodded. "The blow at the breakfast table—did Owen return that after I left?"

"No!" Ichabod's face darkened.

"I think perhaps your magnanimity must extend to

an apology for that, Father. It would be an example to Brooks and his kind. You see," as Ichabod threw back his head with a jerk, "I look on this as one of the greatest works of your life. As Mr. Lincoln says, it may mean the saving of the nation. The credit will always belong to you, and I want history to hold against you nothing that can be misinterpreted to mar your record."

Ichabod's expression gradually lightened. He interrupted Rose to say: "Our private prejudices must give way. Owen Bashford's faction is needed. I shall send him a letter of apology. And, Rose," as she got slowly to her feet, "Rose, my daughter, I have not been altogether blind to your feeling for Owen. I shall make it my duty to make you feel that there has been no real sacrifice."

"Thank you, Father," said Rose dully. "I must go for Bodie." And she left the room on leaden feet.

But she was not to reach her small brother at once, for Owen stood at the door of the little upstairs parlor. He held the door open for her and closed it behind her. His nostrils were pinched, his eyes full of pain.

"Rose! Mr. Lincoln told me. Have you been to your father?"

"Yes."

"Without first seeing me? Was that fair? Had I not the right to question my own death warrant?"

Rose did not reply for a moment while she gathered together every force within her. Then she said: "A little while ago in this room Mr. Lincoln and I buried Rose Franklin the person. There's left only Rose Franklin the Abolitionist. Owen, don't you understand why I did it?"

"Yes, Rose, I understand." The man touched her

tortured face with his trembling fingers. "Look at me, Rose! I want to see if the decision is irrevocable."

His eyes grew more haggard as he gazed. "And do you think that I shall tamely submit to this sort of thing from your father?"

"I've given him my word and he's writing you an apology. Owen, if you do not accept that apology, the wrecking of the new party will be on your head."

"In other words," exclaimed Owen, with sudden bitterness, "if I submit, I lose you. If I do not submit, I wreck the convention, become an object of contempt to you, and lose you anyhow! Rose, this is not justice. It is not—"

He turned from her as the door flung open and Bodie entered, dangling a fish about three inches in length on the end of a string. He was dripping wet and muddy.

"The first one I ever caught, Rose! I brought it to you."

Before Rose could speak her father's secretary appeared in the door. "I have a message for you, sir, from Mr. Lincoln. Would you step this way? He is in Mr. Browning's room with Messrs. Lovejoy and Davis."

Owen drew a long breath. "I'll see you shortly, Rose, and finish this," he said, and followed Arthur down the hall.

Rose led the excited Bodie to his room, murmuring enthusiastic but mechanical admiration of the fish. She helped him change from the dripping velvets.

"You come fishing with me, Rose!" he cried. "It beats any old convention!"

"I wish I could, Bodie dear, but I must spend the rest of the day at the hall."

"And I met Mr. Lincoln outside and he said he felt just like me when he caught his first fish, but that he didn't have on velvet pants. And I told him if he talked about them any more I'd fight him. And he said he'd never blame me. He's a nice man. Lots nicer than Father, even if Father is smarter. I'm going to catch him a fish."

Rose put on her shepherdess hat and held out her hand to Bodie. "You can walk with me as far as Major's Hall. Then you'll know the way," she said.

IV

All that day Rose sat in the hall watching the birth pangs by which a great political party was making its advent into Illinois. What Mr. Lincoln or her father may have said to Owen she did not know, for all that day he did not come near her. And after the first few hours Rose succeeded in concentrating her mind to some degree on the events in the hall.

As the day wore on she found something more than personal excitement enthralling her. Ichabod had convinced Rose months before, as he had convinced the five or six hundred delegates to the convention, that the Abolition movement was not mere party cant, but a deep-seated issue involving the very fate of the nation. Rose watched with breathless eagerness for signs of the partisan hostility which had flared so menacingly in the early morning. What means her father used she did not know, but, soothed and secured from jealousy by her promise, he was able to bring remarkable outward harmony into the session of political enemies. There could be no doubt of the earnestness and high purpose of the gathering. Moved by the national emergency, Whig

and Democrat, Free-soiler, Know-nothing and Abolitionist—the lions and the lambs lay together in apparent amity.

There were many good speeches made—the finest of all undoubtedly by Ichabod Franklin, who, in asking that the new party be known as the Republican, gave a history of the antislavery movement in America that the brilliant Charles Sumner could not have bettered.

And yet—

And yet Rose knew, as did her father and every man and woman in Major's Hall that night, that when the Republican Party of Illinois was born it was born dead.

Ichabod had been able to make men see with their minds what to do. He had not been able to make them feel it with their hearts. It was a party without vital impulse, without cohesion, without driving force. Rose realized this toward the end of the evening with a sense of impending disaster that was epic in its proportions. But, she whispered to herself, the convention must not fail. It must not.

A delegate from one of the border counties was telling of the sacking of Lawrence, Kansas, by guerilla posses. Rose turned impatiently from his spread-eagle eloquence and stooped over Bodie, who lay asleep with his golden head in her lap.

"Bodie," she whispered, "Mr. Lincoln is in the back of the hall by the door. Will you ask him to come here to me?"

Bodie rubbed his sleepy eyes with a clenched fist, from which protruded a fish's silvery tail. "I'll give him the minnie I caught for him," he murmured.

In an astonishingly short time he was back, clinging to Mr. Lincoln's great hand. The lawyer dropped

into Bodie's seat and held the child between his knees. The fish lay in one outspread palm.

"Mr. Lincoln," said Rose, softly, "if they call you, speak!"

"Nothing can rouse this corpse," returned Mr. Lincoln. "It's as dead as this little fish."

"You can rouse it. If the people call you, reply to them. Won't you? Have you, by any chance, outlined something?"

Lincoln nodded. "I've thought for weeks of what ought to be said. I've nothing written, though."

"If they call for you, will you—will you speak?" insisted Rose.

"Only if the call is general. Don't you see that otherwise it would be wasted effort?"

"Yes, I do," agreed Rose. "Will you return to the back of the hall now, Mr. Lincoln?" She put her hand on his arm in apology for the request.

Mr. Lincoln nodded as simply as did Bodie at his sister's requests. He looked down at the very defunct fish in his palm, then at Bodie, leaning against his great knee.

"Isn't it a Jim Dandy?" whispered the little boy, slipping an arm around the lawyer's neck.

"It's more than that," replied Mr. Lincoln soberly. He shook his head over the fish, then solemnly slipped it into his pocket. Bodie gave a wriggle of satisfaction, and Mr. Lincoln kissed the child's round cheek and, with a nod to Rose, returned to the back of the hall.

A moment later the delegate from the border county finished his speech; in the burst of applause that followed, Rose stood erect. Her commanding presence, her splendid look, received instant attention. She raised her hand.

"I want to hear Abraham Lincoln speak!" she cried.

There was a moment's silence while the delegates swung to her suggestion. Then a man shouted, "Lincoln! Abe Lincoln!"

A hundred voices took up the cry. Five hundred voices joined in. Rose sank into her place with a sigh as the tall figure strode down the aisle.

He paused as if to speak from the floor.

"Get up on the platform, Lincoln," roared some one, "and tell us—"

A still greater voice drowned the other. "Speak to us! Tell us, Watchman, what of the night!"

"Watchman, what of the night?"

The phrase caught the imagination of the crowd, and it was repeated in breathless anxiety as Lincoln mounted the platform and stood for a moment waiting for silence.

Ah, well! How shall one describe what Lincoln said? It was sixty-seven years ago that he made this, the greatest speech of his life. Men still live who, as adolescent boys, heard him that May evening in Bloomington. They say that that night, as he stood on that platform, the beauty of his utterance was equaled only by the inspired beauty of his face—that he spoke like a god.

His face was pale. His great eyes burned black fire. His voice, which sometimes had been called too harsh, deepened, and enveloped the great room in thundering organ notes. His audience, always glad to be amused and touched by one of Honest Abe's speeches, sat for the first few moments stunned by the transfiguration of the plain country lawyer into something greater than they readily could conceive.

He moved toward the front of the platform, his hands on his hips, and there was not a man who saw him who did not realize that there was a human being actuated by an overwhelming responsibility to the nation. He spoke for an hour and a half. At the end of the first five minutes reporters dropped their pencils, absorbed by the passion of the orator. At the end of an hour the reporters, with the rest of the audience, had risen from their seats; and when Lincoln, his great arms lifted above his head, made a last appeal to the greatness of men's souls to stand against the break-up of the nation, his audience, pale of face, with tear-drenched eyes, had pressed forward from their places so that they made a solid human mass about the platform. And as he ceased to speak they burst forth in applause that was half worship, seized upon him, and carried him to their hearts.

The new party was born anew, its factions welded by tears.

Rose, clasping her little brother with one arm, pressed forward with the rest, her very soul lifted from her body. As Lincoln finished his peroration she found her father beside her, his face drawn, tears streaming unchecked from his dark eyes.

"Yes! Yes!" she heard him sob. "Yes! Yes! This speech will stay the hand of civil war."

Rose slipped her hand through her father's. "I must thank him," muttered Ichabod. "He has done the impossible. The Republican Party lives and breathes and—"

"Let's go back to the hotel," said Rose, "and talk to him there. It will be impossible to get near him here for a long time."

Ichabod was too profoundly moved to come back to normal at once. He stood running his hands

through his hair and repeating phrases from Lincoln's speech. Rose had not seen him so much moved since her mother died. Suddenly he turned to her.

"I misjudged him!" he exclaimed. "Lincoln is a great man. He can do anything. I shall do for him whatever he asks. A man who can speak like that! By the eternal fathers, he has kindled a torch to-night that shall flare higher and higher, till it lights the world."

Men who could not reach Mr. Lincoln began to come up to congratulate Ichabod. He was strangely humbled, and told one after another that it had not been at his suggestion that Rose had called for Lincoln. The credit was hers.

"Then your daughter has put the country very deeply in her debt," said one man. "This party owes to her an inspiration that should carry it through a century of politics. I was glad to see Owen Bashford subdued and in line to-day."

Ichabod, still in the exalted mood begot by the speech, turned to Rose. "That, too, was my daughter's work!" Rose gave her father a strange look. In spite of the feeling aroused in her by Mr. Lincoln's oratory, she was acutely conscious of the deathlike pain in her heart. Ichabod caught the look. "You are glad, now, of the sacrifice, are you not, Rose?"

Rose, the weary Bodie leaning heavily against her, replied brokenly: "Was it a necessary sacrifice, Father? Now, with the sound of Mr. Lincoln's great plea for devotion to human happiness still in your ears, was it a necessary sacrifice?"

Ichabod stood staring at his daughter from the fine heights to which Lincoln had lifted him. Rose for once saw him as she thought her mother must have idealized him, with a nobility of soul equal to the brilliancy of his mind.

"Do you think that it was not necessary, Rose?"

"I know it was not," she replied brokenly.

"And do you think," cried Ichabod, "that I can do less for the party than you, or—or my deadliest rival?"

He whirled suddenly and crossed the aisle to where Owen Bashford stood with a group of friends. Ichabod held out his hand to the younger editor. "Sir," he said, "do you realize that it was my daughter who put Mr. Lincoln on that platform this evening?"

Very reluctantly Owen took the proffered hand. "We all realize that, sir."

"Then we owe to her," continued Ichabod, "the fact that we've seen the first great blow struck at slavery. That speech, Mr. Bashford, has made me feel very small, very petty. I wish to bury all my private strifes. Will you accept my friendship, sir, public and private?"

Owen's group gasped. Nothing could have so assured them of the quality of Mr. Lincoln's speech as the effect it was showing on the bitter and brilliant Ichabod Franklin. Owen, whose tear-stained cheeks did not detract from his dignity, bowed over the hand which still clung to his. Ichabod, with heaven knows what sudden cognizance of the grief his selfishness had caused, cleared his throat.

"Come, Owen," he said huskily, "come over to Rose."

And Rose, watching the conversation she could not hear, clung trembling to Bodie as she saw the two approach her. Her father was smiling. "Rose, here's our friend Owen. I'm asking him to take you and Bodie back to the hotel."

Bodie showed sudden interest in life. "Say, he

made that speech with the fish I gave him in his pocket. I'll get you one to-morrow, Father."

"If it will do for me—" Ichabod suddenly interrupted himself to catch at the sleeve of one of his own reporters. "Cooper! Are your notes complete? We must print that speech without a single omission."

Cooper blinked at his chief with bloodshot eyes. "But—but, Mr. Franklin, I couldn't take notes listening to that!"

"What do you mean, sir?" roared Ichabod.

"What I say," replied Cooper with a gulp. "There isn't a reporter here who took down that speech!"

"Where's Hartopp, my correspondent?" exclaimed Owen.

"Get all the newspapermen together at the hotel at once," snapped Ichabod. "Rose, your memory is excellent. Come along."

He dashed out into the night. Rose and Owen followed, leading the comatose Bodie between them. They had not exchanged a word. It was not necessary. The very prairie stars above them sang the ecstasy in their hearts.

When they reached the hotel, the effort to recapture the speech began. But it was a vain hunt. Mr. Lincoln could not recall what he had said. Entirely exhausted, he took a solitary walk under the stars and went to his bed. No one in the audience had set down the speech. It was lost to the world forever.

It had reconciled the irreconcilable. It had in very truth, as history has proved, lighted the torch that was to flare around the world. Its passions, its tragic beauty, its noble inspirations, had breathed life into the dead souls of men. Then it had disseminated itself into the common air, and men were to hand it on to posterity only in a phrase—The Lost Speech.

QUESTIONS

1. What was the purpose of the convention held in Bloomington? What great issue was at stake?
2. What was Ichabod Franklin's part in this convention?
3. Explain the cause of the disagreement between Ichabod Franklin and Owen Bashford.
4. How was Abraham Lincoln then regarded?
5. What responsibilities rested upon Rose? Was she capable of assuming them? Explain.
6. Look up in history the matter of the Sumner-Brooks affair.
7. Explain the points of view held by Ichabod Franklin and Owen Bashford regarding this dispute.
8. What was the immediate cause of Franklin's attack upon Bashford?
9. What were the results of this attack?
10. What was Lincoln's plan to smooth over the difficulties between Franklin and Bashford?
11. In his interview with Rose, what qualities are evident in Abraham Lincoln's character?
12. How does Rose respond to Mr. Lincoln's demands? Do you agree with her decision?
13. Explain the manner in which she presents the situation to her father.
14. What traits of character account for Ichabod Franklin's actions?
15. How does he receive Rose's decision?
16. When does it become evident that the convention is not successful?
17. What vital force is lacking to make it a success?
18. Why does Rose call upon Lincoln to speak?
19. How is her suggestion received?
20. What are your feelings as you read of the scene at the convention as Lincoln speaks?
21. Was the convention a success? What made it so?
22. Why is this story particularly well named?
23. What character adds a quality of lightness and humor to the story?
24. Explain the terms: Democrat, Whig, Free-soiler, Know-nothing, Abolitionist. Consult your history books.
25. What portions of the story are historically true?

26. Where is the greater interest in this story—in the truth or fiction?
27. What have you learned about Lincoln from this story that you did not appreciate before? About American History?
28. Be prepared to give a general report of the period in United States history covered by this story.

AN OHIO FABLE

BY

THOMAS BOYD

THOMAS ALEXANDER BOYD

(1898—)

Thomas Boyd has first-hand knowledge of the people, times, and conditions of which he writes. He was born in Defiance, Ohio, July 3d, 1898, and attended the public graded schools there, but his higher education was at preparatory and private school. At the outbreak of the World War, he joined the United States Marines and served in France with the Sixth Regiment from September 16th, 1917, to April 19th, 1919. A year and a half later, October 15th, 1920, he married Woodward Boyd, herself an author and frequent contributor to *Scribner's Magazine*. Mrs. Boyd was a native of St. Paul, Minn., where they now make their home. But the greater part of their time is spent in travel; they frequently go South and West for extended visits, and New York City claims a considerable portion of their time.

Some of Mr. Boyd's better-known stories are "Through the Wheat" (1923); "The Dark Cloud" (1924); "Points of Honor" (1925); "Samuel Drummond" (1926); "Shadow of the Long Knives" (1927); "The White Savage" (1928).

He is a literary critic and a contributor to the *Minneapolis Sunday Journal*, *The Bookman*, *Scribner's*, *The Saturday Review*, and *The American Mercury*.

Other stories by Thomas Boyd:

Our Top Sergeant	Kentucky Boy
Bow to Progress	Little Gall
Grandfather's Dog	Uninvited
Salt of the Earth	Responsibility
Good Roads	Unadorned

AN OHIO FABLE

You will find (he said) almost any kind of weather in Ohio, particularly up in this northwestern part. There are floods in the spring, droughts in the summer, and a cyclone is likely to surprise you at any season of the year; hail-storms are fre-

quent, often jagged bolts of lightning strike down people traversing the mud roads or make some out-building crackle and light up the sky with its flames.

Still (he went on) it must have been lovely once, as fitting a stage for the Eden scene as any in the world. But that was when the Indians were there, when the country was a great forest of black walnut, butternut, sugar-maple, hickory, and oak; and when the game was thick beneath the branches of the trees. The country was like that the morning General Wayne—old Mad Anthony—stood at the fork made by the Maumee and Auglaize Rivers meeting, the day he set forth to fight the battle of Fallen Timbers. The country was like that when our grandfathers, floating up the river in a pirogue or striking through a long and ill-marked woodland trail, came to settle it.

They built their cabins and they reared their broods, and thought it a luxury to be enabled to move from a rough log house into a house whose logs were hewn. They made roads called corduroy, which meant that trees had been felled over the bottomless mud and viscous clay in order that vehicles might pass. They cleared some ground and planted grain; and by ceaseless labor and tight economy some of them honestly prospered.

Well (he went on) there were others who didn't do so well. And George Goodrich was one of them. He lived 'way up in the northeast corner of the county, miles from anywhere. He had a one-room cabin, in which himself, his wife, and their three children ate and slept; he had a barn, a granary, and several acres of cleared ground. He worked as hard as the next man, from sunup to sunset, but he never had more than enough to last him through the win-

ter. But George never borrowed: if he ran short of flour or meal, his family lived on what he could bring down with his musket.

Well, one year the corn-crop failed, and that increased the bleakness of the following winter. And when spring came George, and many other farmers, had an empty granary. George hadn't a solitary ear of seed-corn for planting. And he was pretty lean around the middle. The ground had thawed, and the roads were softer than axle-grease; you could flounder over them, but you couldn't make much headway. That was the shape George Goodrich was in, but no worse off than a good many other farmers. In fact, it seemed as if Bill Evans and Emmett Lang were the only two farmers in the county who did have seed-corn.

But Bill Evans and Emmett Lang always had plenty of everything. Emmett ploughed with a span of horses instead of oxen; he had also a driving team (nice, fat-bellied, sleek-limbed bays), and he lived in a big frame house. You had only to look at Emmett and you knew he was a man of consequence in those parts. He had begun to get stout, had a red face and a fan-shaped beard, wore a broad-brimmed hat and a long coat. Bill Evans was of less girth and height than Emmett; his forehead was a polished dome of such dimensions that it made his chin, partly obscured by a villainous mustache, look small. But he could reap, bind, and shock with the best man in the county, and his hewn log house was, for those days and parts, spacious.

George Goodrich heard that Emmett Lang and Bill Evans had seed-corn to spare. Emmett's farm lay twelve miles west, while the Evans property was fifteen miles to the south. And the quality of the

roads being equal—mud with corduroy stretches through a wilderness—George Goodrich decided to get his seed-corn from Emmett Lang.

So one morning he got out his yoke of oxen and hitched them to the wagon. As it would be an all-day trip, his wife fried some pork, gave him a loaf of salt-rising bread, and advised him about crossing the swelling creeks before she let him go. Then he turned out the lane just as the sun was coming up over the wood behind him, and the oxen pushed stolidly along through the path of mud which wound interminably among the great branched trees. Pflug-ka-pflug went the deadened sound of the hoofs of the oxen; pflap-hsst splashed the mud up over the wheels and against the wagon-box as the team slowly lumbered forward. And George Goodrich sat motionless, thinking that he would soon be planting the seed-corn, hoping to have got it into the earth in time for an early crop. Meanwhile the mud was deep and thick; from time to time the oxen stumbled. And George Goodrich sat on the bespattered wagon-box, moving through the forest in the freshness of spring, unmindful of the call of the blackbirds whose heads in the noonday sun showed green. He had his thoughts on the seed-corn, the possession of which meant so much to him.

It was noon when he reached the farm of Emmett Lang and saw the frame buildings—the house, barn, granaries, corn-crib—and the green fields of placidly undulating wheat which had been sown the previous November. The sight gladdened him, for with such evidence of plenty before him he knew that his long ride had not been for nothing.

As he stopped his oxen in the barnyard and climbed down from the wagon-box, Emmett Lang

came out of the house, removing with the back of his hand the generous stains of dinner from his fan-shaped whiskers. He met George midway between the house and the barn, stood with his hands on his hips and his head thrown back, so that he seemed to look down his nose as he asked: "Well, George, what can I do for you?"

The question was easily answered. George said: "I calc'lated I'd git a couple sacks of seed-corn from you, Emmett."

Then Emmett teetered back on his heels and said: "I reckon you got the cash in your pocket to pay for it?"

"Why, no," said George, "I calc'lated to pay you back in corn when I husked next fall."

At that Emmett not only teetered on his heels but sagely nodded his head. After a while he said: "Well, George, I can't let you have any seed-corn. There's plenty of folks around here who want seed-corn and have got the cash to pay for it." And he turned and walked back to the house. George answered over his shoulder, "Reckon you're right, Emmett," and, turning his oxen around in the middle of the yard, he began his twelve-mile journey homeward through that slimy mess of mud.

Well, George got home in good enough shape, but he was worse off than he had been in the morning. A day was gone and there was no seed-corn—which he had to have. He had to have it so much that he got up at four o'clock the next morning to go after it. But this time he would go prepared. When Bill Evans asked him if he had the money with which to buy the seed-corn he would jerk it out of his pocket so quickly that it would make Bill's head swim.

After George hitched up the next morning he loaded on a couple of fat shoats which Jim Barlow, who had the next farm south of his, had asked for. And while Jim hadn't any seed-corn to spare he did have money.

Barlow's farm was not on the road that led to Bill Evans; and thus George Goodrich had before him a trip somewhat longer than fifteen miles. And again the oxen went down the lane, dragging the wagon over the ruts and stumps in the light of dawn. And George sat on the wagon-box, the squealing and grunting of the pigs reminding him of the money which Jim Barlow would give for them and of the seed-corn which Bill Evans would exchange for the money.

There is no mode of travel known slower than that furnished by a yoke of oxen. And though the distance to Barlow's farm was only five miles, the day was brightly advanced when George reached it. He found Jim in the barn, tinkering with his plough, and said: "Jim, I brought these shoats along because I've got to have some cash this morning. Reckon you can let me have it?" Jim could, and did; and George Goodrich turned back to the main road with silver dollars clinking in his pocket.

On he went, the feel of the money distracting his mind from the ineffable dulness of the ride. And as he looked over the dumb crowns of the heads of the oxen, beating out the distance more slowly than a requiem, he doubtless felt that hard work on the next day, with a grain-sack caught near his middle and one of the boys behind him covering up the golden kernels which he dropped, would more than make up for those two days spent in tedious travel.

He came to the Bean Creek ford, where the

swirling water riffled the wagon-spokes, climbed the green bank, dense with leafage, and two miles farther was driving along the swiftly running Maumee River. It was afternoon when he reached Bill Evans's farm. And as the oxen dragged up the road he saw Bill ploughing on a knoll that was dry enough for the sod to be turned over by the shares. Stopping the team in the lane, he struck off across the fields, the silver dollars jangling one against another in his pocket as he climbed the rail fences.

Bill Evans waited for him in the middle of a furrow; he stood with his hat off, wiping the sweat from his high forehead with his shirt-sleeve. Bill said, "Howdy, George," and George answered: "Howdy, Bill, hear you got some seed-corn?"

"Yes, I got some left," said Bill Evans.

"I'd like a couple sacks——"

Bill looked at George, and said after a moment: "Well now, George, you got the money to pay for this here corn?"

George thrust his hand into his pocket and whipped out the silver dollars. Bill looked at them, saw the sunlight shining on them as they lay in the palm of George's hand. He sighed. "Well now, George, I'm sorry I can't let you have that seed-corn. There's plenty of folks around here who need seed-corn and ain't got the money to buy it with. I'm sorry, but I got to give it to them."

QUESTIONS

1. What is a fable?
2. Why is this story called a fable?
3. Re-tell this story in a few well-chosen words.
4. What are corduroy roads?
5. Why was not Goodrich more responsive to the beauties of nature as he rode to the farm of Emmett Lang? Do you

think one requires a certain amount of material comfort in order to appreciate the beautiful?

6. Write a character sketch of Emmett Lang and Bill Evans.
7. Write a theme about the locality in which these two characters appear.
8. Write a theme describing a day spent with George Goodrich.
9. Read O. Henry's "Gift of the Magi." What similarity do you find between it and this fable?

A FRIEND
BY
ELSIE SINGMASTER

ELSIE SINGMASTER

(1879-)

For the past twenty-five years, Elsie Singmaster has been a resident of Gettysburg, Penn., where she lives within sight of the famous battle-field. The early years of her life were spent in Lehigh County, Penn., and afforded her close contact with the Pennsylvania Dutch settlers of that district. These two localities, with their wealth of historical background and local color, form the settings about which Miss Singmaster weaves most of her narratives.

Yet her writing is by no means confined to these two themes. In "A Friend," included here, Elsie Singmaster offers a story of quite a different type. A modern, amusing and very human sketch, "A Friend" still reveals its author's understanding and warm sympathy.

Elsie Singmaster was born at Schuylkill, Penn., in 1879, and has been writing successful stories since her early days in college. She first attended Cornell and then became a student at Radcliffe, from which institution she was graduated in 1907. She was married to Mr. Harold Lewars, who died in 1915. Besides her short stories, for which she is best known, Miss Singmaster has to her credit five novels and one biography.

The titles of some of her short stories follow:

When Sarah Saved the Day	November the Nineteenth
A Man in the House	Courier of the Czar
Gettysburg	Peasant Blood

A FRIEND

Pale, with unsteady step and hands which almost dropped the plate of fried ham and eggs and the coffee-pot, Florence Kelly walked from the kitchen into the dining room. The kitchen was small and filled with tables and the utensils of a none too systematic housekeeping. There were also the tubs and other paraphernalia of a laundry, and many infan-

tile garments, hanging on a line, soaking in the tubs, tossed into a corner.

The dining room was small also, and filled with large pieces of furniture which together formed a set—a sideboard which was spoken of as a buffet, a large table, a china closet and six chairs. There was also a wicker structure which resembled the vehicles in which the ill, the indolent and the old are pushed about at Atlantic City, but which was really a coach for two infants. Both dining room and kitchen were ill lighted; their windows opened opposite other windows, no more than six feet away.

The ham and eggs in one hand, the coffeepot in the other, Florence moved toward the table. She was slender; she could glide easily between the coach and the buffet. She had two large features—her nose and her brown eyes, both of which seemed to have outgrown the rest of her thirteen-year-old body. At present both were red and inflamed. Her hair was brown and straight, her lips were thin; she looked dull, forlorn, sullen.

The two men at the table were like Florence—small, even wizened. Father sat at the head, Grandfather Kelly at the side. Father was a bookkeeper and his eyes were fixed upon the slice of bread which he had spread with jam, as though it were an intricate calculation. Between him and Florence there was a strong resemblance, except that the rest of him had grown up to his nose.

Between Florence and Grandfather Kelly there was an even stronger resemblance; though grandfather's hair was sparse and gray, and he had a white beard. Beside his nose, his other features seemed to have lost in the race; it loomed large, as if it said "Got ahead of you at last." This was what it said

to Florence, who was an observing creature, especially where matters of outline were concerned. She had as yet little sense of color, but she was notable in school for her drawing. Her skill, lifting her above the mass of students, satisfied a fierce pride.

Grandfather Kelly had not always been here. There had been, first of all, father and mother and Florence. When Florence was twelve years old the twins had come, and now there were the twins and grandfather. With the arrival of the twins mother had been strangely transformed; instead of continuing to settle into middle age, she had apparently returned to youth. She had, moreover, taken a strange attitude toward Florence—she seemed to have become her stepmother rather than her mother; as though, while the twins were of her blood, Florence was of no kin.

Grandfather had taken up his abode with his son because his house in near-by Scranton had disappeared into the earth. At first a miner, then a mine boss, he had saved money and bought himself the house and saved still more money. The company which operated under the section in which he lived had agreed with the city not to remove the pillars of solid coal, but they did not keep to their agreement. In the night grandfather's house sank down, with grandfather sleeping. In the morning there was a deep pit, in the center, grandfather's house, with grandfather sitting on the roof; by his side a satchel, old, square, covered with oiled cloth. Before the eyes of ten thousand people grandfather walked down the sloping roof, his satchel in his hand, and up the sloping side of the pit, under his arms a rope held by those on the bank, so that if the earth subsided he might be upheld.

In the morning his house was invisible and in a few days there was much money in his pocket—money for his house, money for his land, money for his shocked nerves, money for his silence. In his pocket, figuratively speaking, his money was likely to stay, except what he paid for board.

Grandfather was strange; he seemed ever to brood, as though he found himself again descending into the pit or as though he could not believe himself rescued. There were many who offered to take care of him, but there was, of course, only one place for him to go—to the house of his son. Beryl—that was mother's name—spoke of his coming with a sigh, but it was not a matter for sighing. He paid well, he made no trouble. In addition to cash on interest, he had large disability benefits from an organization which he had long ago joined. It was probable that he did not touch the interest. Happily, in the very nature of things, a term was fixed for his life, and it was well that he had heirs. How else would he have found the care, the attention, the deference which were accorded him?

Before him Florence set the ham and eggs. She poured three cups of coffee and set the first beside him. It was a fact, though unnoted, that it was she who paid him most deference, though she was not designed by Beryl to be his heir. It was she who had given up most for him—her bedroom—she slept on a leather davenport in the parlor—her peace—she studied in the kitchen—her leisure—mother made his presence an excuse for exhaustion. Moreover, these sacrifices were small compared with the chief sacrifice of Florence, to be consummated this day.

Having passed the second cup of coffee to father, she sat herself down before the third. She looked

as though she drank too much coffee; the dullness of her skin was not due altogether to the unbecoming dark blue of her old middy blouse. But a stimulant she must have. She took a swallow and at once she began to cry.

"What ails you, Florence?" asked her father, roused from his lethargy.

"She burned herself! Can't you see she burned herself?" cried grandfather. Grandfather seldom spoke, but once in a long time he shouted. The effect was startling, as though a green mountain had suddenly become volcanic. His voice was deep, heavy, burred with fierce, rolling Irish *r*'s. He said not "water," but "watter." "Fill your mouth with cold watter!"

Florence rose and passed into the kitchen and there produced queer sounds—a gurgling as she tried to soothe the burning of her throat, a choking as she tried to quench her sobs. She heard a voice, a foot-step; she straightened her shoulders, her cheeks flamed; she walked back into the dining room and sat down. Mother was coming. Florence preferred, for some obscure reason, to be at her place at the table.

Mother was not Irish like father and grandfather; she was a variety of the coal-region olla-podrida—she had in her some Lithuanian, some Little Russian, more Pole, a good deal of Slovak. If she had been a Turk she would have ranked high as a beauty. Her skin and eyes were dark, her black hair was curly, her features were regular—she satisfied all harem requirements. She was dressed, as for the harem, in a loose pink silk robe and red slippers with pompons. On her head was a pink silk cap with red ribbons. Father was indifferently aware

that under her pink robe was a nightgown; Florence was furiously aware of the same fact. Grandfather did not give mother a thought; he looked down at his ham and eggs as though he despised them.

There had been no speech save two exclamations before mother arrived; the world was now filled with the sound of a voice. There was nothing Turkish about mother's voice, and nothing Polish, nothing Italian, and nothing Slovak; it was purely American.

"I'll say I had a bad night," said she. "If I can sleep through the shiftin' engine, I'm all right, but if the kids wakes me, I'm done."

Father chewed his ham furiously. In her own mind Florence put words into his mouth—they were these: "Yes, and instead of tending them yourself, you called me to get bottles." Florence was wrong. Father felt no rancor; he had long since passed into a state of paralysis which knew no sharp emotion.

Mother helped herself to a large slice of ham, two fried eggs and a cup of coffee.

"I'll say, Florence, you might have kept these hot for me."

Again Florence formed fierce words in her mind—"You ought to get up!"—but she did not utter them. She was saving her voice for other words she would have to utter before the day was over.

"The kids is got to have some new clothes," said mother. "Coats they have to have for winter, and a new blanket for the coach. I ought to have ten dollars."

Father put his hand into his pocket and took out ten dollars. Mother put out a hand. Something about the motion made it seem, plump though it was, like a claw.

"An' I got to have five dollars for myself." Father said nothing; he rose and turned away. "I said I got to have five dollars," said mother. Father laid five dollars on the table. "Doled out, little by little," said mother pleasantly.

Florence bent her head; sometimes she would have been ashamed, but not today. Other emotions racked her.

"There's one things about my kids—they go to sleep when they're fed," said mother. "They're healthy; they take after my family. They're going to be big—you can see that—they have large bones. My grandfather and his three brothers in the old country, they weighed a thousand pounds together, and so with my great-grandfather and his three brothers. Not that they were fat; they were just big, powerful, husky men. My kids has no Irish in them; they take after me. That's what everybody says; they say——"

Grandfather rose and stepped into the narrow hall. He was going to his room—the room which had belonged to Florence. Here he kept his few belongings, including the small satchel, now tightly locked, which he had carried down the slanting roof and up the steep uncertain slope. Into the depths had sunk all his furniture, all his clothing, all his books, for grandfather owned a few books and prized them. What was in the satchel no one knew. It contained no securities—those were in the bank. Mother believed it was filled to the lock with greenbacks. Coin it did not hold; many times she had weighed it speculatively in her hand.

Father was visible for an instant as he passed the door wearing his hat and overcoat. Having finished her coffee, Florence rose and began to clear the table.

"If you had a heart you'd stay home," said mother. "Always the last drop squeezed out—always the last drop!" Mother helped herself to another slice of ham, another egg. It was the egg which Florence had cooked for herself, but which she felt unable to swallow. Mother continued, raising her voice above the noise of dishes rattled in the sink. The noise was louder than necessary. "You get home promptly at noon, and after school, mind! I won't have time to get dinner, and this afternoon you're to take the kids out."

Florence heard, above the sound of the dishes, a little crow. It was a sound which she feared, because it softened her heart. With the babies in her arms she could no longer hate mother; hate became a wild, intolerable grief. She heard a bell ringing—it was the bell of Stevens School—and mother was lingering, idling so that she would either have to be late or else leave her dishes unwashed and thus merit reproof.

"I must go!" she called.

Mother laughed. "I'll say you're in a hurry," said she. "As if it would make any difference!"

Hearing now two crows instead of one, Florence looked still more wildly round. Her coat and hat hung behind the door, her books were strapped and lying on the window sill. On top of them lay a large envelope in which was a drawing she meant to present to her teacher, Miss Canfield. She seized them all and ran down to the next landing. As she stood dressing for the street a door opened and Mrs. Yetts, a middle-aged woman, put out her head.

"What ails you, Florence?"

"Nothing," answered Florence sharply.

"Ain't she up yet?"

"Yes."

"She says you ain't going to school any more, because you'll be fourteen tomorrow. Is that so?"

Florence's lips quivered. Her hat was on; she was struggling into her coat.

"The lazy thing!" said Mrs. Yetts. "She ought to take care of her own kids, that's what she ought! Your father——"

"We look after our family affairs," said Florence. Along with the proud declaration came a sob like the bleat of a sheep. "We don't——" Vivid words, such as mother might apply to Mrs. Yetts, came into her mind and were choked back. She ran down the steps and into the street. "If only I had a friend," said she—"just one friend!"

At noon Florence ran all the way home. She no longer shed tears, or bleated like a sheep; her tears were dried and dry despair filled her breast. She had become an automaton whose will was the will of others. She paused now and then, but not to wipe her eyes. Her jersey bloomers caught the coarse serge of her dress and wound it about her thighs. Her dark-brown woolen stockings were ill fitting; round her ankles they lay in folds and between the upper edge and the hem of her bloomers showed a line of white skin.

Between her and home lay the railroad and the large station; she often took a short cut along the platform and through the building. She ran now, hurrying against the wind for the shelter of walls and a roof. In the station she stopped short, as though someone had seized her in a vise. There was no train for an hour, but the waiting room was never empty. Express trains brought immigrants from all the countries of her mother's ancestry, and here they

waited for other trains—for Nanticoke and Nescopeck, Nesquehoning and Shickshinny.

It was a sound which halted her, and not a physical obstacle. On a bench sat a Polish woman, a baby at her breast; two other children, almost babies, beside her. Near by on the floor sat a little boy of six, his hobnailed boots outstretched. He rocked back and forth, moving his arms as though he were in a boat and rowing. Meanwhile he sang, over and over again, the same incomprehensible song, sweet and shrill. It was not a merry song; it had in it intimations of age-long weariness and woe. He sang it lightly, but even his own cheerfulness could not make it gay.

Florence stood spellbound; then tears began to run down her cheeks. She had strange unaccountable joys—this was such a joy. While she listened she was outside herself; she forgot all but the source of rapture. When she remembered who she was and where she was, she felt as though she had been struck. Recalling instantly all her griefs, even her nose, so much too large for her face, she hurried on through the door, up the street toward home. A few squares beyond, the town came to an abrupt end against a mountain of black culm; she felt a wide impulse to run on furiously and strike her head against it and die.

The apartment was empty, except for grandfather, who could be heard moving about behind the closed door of his room. All was as she had left it, except that mother's breakfast dishes had been carried to the sink.

Mother was out; with fifteen dollars in her possession she would not be likely to stay in. When she returned, which might be at any moment, she would

expect her dinner. Father would expect his dinner, the twins would expect theirs. Only grandfather and Florence did not care if they never ate. It was quarter to twelve; at quarter-past one she must be back in school for the last session of her life, for the perfect recitations which were hers, for the presentation of her farewell gift. To most persons Miss Canfield was an efficient machine; to Florence she was a combination of Venus and Minerva.

She began to run about, into the dining room, back into the kitchen, into the dining room again. She put the coffee on the gas stove; and looked at the clock; she opened a can and looked at the clock; she tied a bit of rag about a cut finger and looked at the clock. She manipulated the bread knife awkwardly and saved herself from another cut by a miracle. She heard her name called; she ran down the steps. She toiled up, a twin in her arms. He crowed with delight. She sobbed with a sharp sound; she carried him to mother's bedroom and laid him down. He howled.

She looked at the clock—quarter-past twelve it was now. Mother came up the stairs, the other twin in her arms. She was panting from the exertion. The twin was uncertain in her grasp; he howled like his brother, and in the duet was no Slavic mournfulness, no almost unendurably sweet cadence. Mother was fond of the twins, but she bade them "Shut up!" She was visible as she passed the door to lay down her burden. It was no wonder that she panted; enfolding her large body was a coat of fur, or near fur, new and enormous. She presented an extraordinary aspect as she went down the hall. The coat was short, though vastly broad; her pink-clad legs had much the same proportion; her feet pitched forward on high heels.

Florence looked at the clock; it was half-past. She heard the steps of father; she heard a bumping sound—for him had been left the double coach. She took the coffee from the stove, the warmed beans from the can, the sliced sausage from the bag. Mother was sitting at the table. Beyond in the bedroom lay the twins, their feet high in air, each happy with a cracker. Mother's elbows were on the table, her chin was in her hands.

"My feet's that tired!" said mother.

Father entered from the hall and sat down; grandfather entered from his room and sat down. Florence carried the coffee cups round the table. It would soon be quarter of; it would soon be one. Then she must run—run with all her might.

Mother was in a good humor; she did not complain because the beans were not thoroughly heated; she made no remarks about the coffee. She said, however, a great deal about the twins.

"I tell you I get the compliments when I go out! I met my cousin Stanley; he says, 'My what legs!' he says. 'And all four alike as tenpins!' I met my cousin Mamie—my, she has the meager kid!"

Father said nothing, grandfather said nothing, Florence said nothing. In the bedroom the babies crowed; they were really extraordinary for amiability. Florence chewed her small bites fine; only thus could she get them down her throat. She listened to mother with half her mind. Mother's good nature was never reminiscent of past pleasure; it was motivated, politic, cunning.

"My cousin Stanley, he said, 'They sure are your kids, Berlie!' He said he bet Gene Tunney had such legs, or Douglas Fairbanks, he said. He——"

The clock struck one, Florence leaped. "I must go!"

Grandfather remained silent, as was his custom; father continued to eat beans and sausage; mother made no comment on Florence's departure. The reason for her affability became clear in her next remark.

"They had fine fur coats at Simkovitch's," said she—"five dollars down and five a week. I——"

"What!"

About once a year father roared like that. Florence dashed down the stairs.

At four o'clock Florence ran home. She was without books; the property of the school board, they had been returned. The words were said. Miss Canfield accepted her parting gift—a drawing of the school-house with Miss Canfield herself stepping out the door. Miss Canfield seemed to feel no regret; she was as composed as Florence herself. She showed the other pupils Florence's drawing; they admired, but not many were sorry that Florence was going; she was an example, an odious comparison.

Florence hurried up the street, crossing the railroad tracks, but avoiding the station with a shiver. The little boy might still be there—the new arrivals sometimes had to wait for hours. She could endure no singing. The wind still blew; it whirled her skirt against her jersey bloomers so that she had to turn round and let it whirl back. This was no afternoon for the twins to be taken out; she would go on with their washing and amuse them as she worked. The twins were like their mother in other ways besides size—they were indolent, satisfied to stay where they were put, provided only that they were fed.

The twins were already out. The rabbits whose skins had been sewed together for mother's coat

seemed to have imparted their active impulses. For her to go out twice in a day was unprecedented, but here she came, wearing her new coat, her diaphanous pink stockings, her high heels. She leaned upon the coach, pushing it slowly along. In her countenance was an expression of victory with honor.

"You get the things washed up, Florry," said she. "Put them in the rinse; then you can hang them up at bedtime. I got a steak and there's plenty of onions. I'm going to buy a pie."

Florence felt a motion within, as though her stomach turned over bodily.

"You ought to be glad you're free," said mother. The last word was a squeal—it was mother who was free, and knew it.

"When I holler through the tube, you come down and help with the kids. We'll have to take the coach up. I don't trust that Yetts woman." Mother's loud voice spoke under Mrs. Yetts' window. "You needn't have a grouch on, Florence! I stopped school when I was ten."

Florence climbed the stairs. She washed the babies' clothes, she made mother's bed, she set the table. There was no sound except what she produced, for a long time. At last came mother's voice from far away. She ran down and took a baby from the coach.

"I'm done for," declared mother. "You'll have to come again, and you'll have to fetch the coach. I shouldn't be surprised if there was something the matter with my heart."

Mother took off her slippers and went in her pink-clad feet up the stairs. "Why don't they sometimes wash the stairs?" she demanded in a loud and angry tone.

Florence put the steak into the pan where the onions were already cooking. She did not lift her head toward the clock; she saw only that which was on the level of her eyes, or beneath it.

Grandfather came up the stairs, father came up the stairs, mother rose from her bed. "Florry," called she, "is supper ready?"

"Yes," said Florence.

Father sat at the head of the table, mother at the foot, Florence and grandfather at the sides.

"This meat is tough as tough," declared father.

"I'll settle that butcher!" Mother spoke with angry sympathy; a victory made mother complaisant beyond words.

Grandfather began to eat, his head bent, his eyes fixed, as though he could not escape from thoughts of the deep pit. Florence tried to eat in vain.

"My cousin Stanley——"

"I don't want to hear about your cousin Stanley!" declared father. "I——" He stopped short, the carving knife held like a baton. It was no change of mind which stayed his downward and altogether innocuous motion; it was a tap at the door.

"Come in!" called mother with relief. "Come in!"

The door opened and Florence uttered suddenly her bleating sob. In the doorway stood Miss Canfield, known to her, strange to all but her. Grandfather, father, mother—all were silent.

"I'm Florence's teacher," Miss Canfield explained. She looked from face to face; it was as she planned; Florence's family were all here—not only her mother, whom she knew by sight, but her father and her grandfather, so famous for his adventure and his rescue. "I'd like to talk to you about Florence." She looked about as if for a chair.

The charms of mother, it is sorrowful to relate, no longer moved father to gallantry, but this lady somehow lifted him to his feet. He placed a chair for her.

"I hope she's not been cutting up," said he.

Miss Canfield smiled and shook her head. When she smiled, the adoration of Florence became comprehensible.

"Far from it. Will you go on with your supper if I sit here?" Miss Canfield looked at father and mother, and last of all at grandfather. Florence gazed at her, round-eyed, but at Florence she did not glance.

"Florence told me today that she'll be fourteen tomorrow and that she's not coming to school any more."

Florence pressed her hand to her lips; vague hopes threatened suffocation.

"That's a true word," said mother, and Florence plunged back into the pit. Mother spoke and chewed her beefsteak; she spoke and drank coffee. She did not often have a new auditor, and she took the floor, as was proper. She was the head of the family—no one need think otherwise! "That's the fact," said she. "Florence has had schooling enough; she don't need any more. I stopped school when I was ten, and to tell the truth, what I had before I was ten didn't do me much good. If you send the girls to school longer they get the wrong ideas. You know these spindly flappers. When I was ten and stopped school I had seven little brothers and sisters. Florence can be glad she has only two little brothers. It don't do any good to talk, miss; I've got her permit from the superintendent already, and the matter's settled. For once the law is on the

side of the poor mother. I slaved for this family all these years and I can't do it any more. I feel my age. If you had three children to bear and look after, you'd know what I mean. As it is, you can understand something from woman to woman." By this remark mother meant nothing at all, but it sounded well. "Would you have some supper?"

Florence saw Miss Canfield's eyes turn toward father. It was useless—father's eyes were on his plate.

Miss Canfield uttered sweet words: "Florence has been my best pupil."

"I don't doubt that," replied mother. "Florence has had every chance." The sudden light of a new idea came into mother's eyes. "Why, my father's a very smart man. If he didn't have to work in the mines there's no telling how high he would have gone. And him not being a boss is the result of jealousy. My cousin Stanley, he's a boxer; he——"

Florence joined her hands in a painful clasp—why did mother bring in cousin Stanley? She was ashamed of cousin Stanley—of his enormous body, his broad face.

"Then why not give her a chance to develop her mind?" asked Miss Canfield. Florence saw Miss Canfield glance at grandfather. Grandfather had bent his chin into his collar; he looked, to Miss Canfield, with his sparse beard and his narrow forehead, like a goat who might charge. There was, she decided, no hope in him. Florence saw her eyes return to mother. "We have hundreds of children who haven't a good mental inheritance, but here's one who has. Why not give her good mind a chance?"

"Here's right where she can use her good mind,"

said mother. "You teachers may look down at us housekeepers, but it takes a mind to wash, to cook, to bake, to sew, to—to"—the multiform accomplishments of a good housekeeper did not come at once to mother's mind—"to sweep, to dust, to polish, to——"

"But——"

"I'd like you to see Florence's brothers," said mother. "You fetch them, Florence."

Florence rose dumbly and fetched them both.

"Give one to me and one to daddy," said mother. Stiffly father put out his arms; he looked embarrassed, even ashamed. "Look at them!" cried mother. "You can see whose they are, can't you? I met my cousin Stanley today; he said such——"

Florence saw Miss Canfield rise. She looked from one to the other, but she caught no eye but Florence's, and from Florence she looked quickly away. Father looked down, grandfather's head bent still lower. Miss Canfield rose, not because she meant to depart at once but because she meant to toss on the table her last card. She took from a Manila envelope several sheets of paper.

"Florence has more talent at drawing than any child we've ever had in the city schools," said she. Here's some of her work. It would be——"

"That's not strange," said mother, another bite of beefsteak in her mouth. "When I was in school I——"

Mother ended her sentence with a shriek, father looked aghast, Florence gaped like one bereft of sense, a twin echoed his mother's yell. Grandfather had risen from the table, upsetting his chair. He rushed like a madman from the room. Mother raised her finger, pointing it to her forehead. She had an-

other bright idea; she looked at Miss Canfield with strong disapproval.

"It's a pity to come and disturb the peace of an old man," she said acidly.

She was still pointing to her forehead and talking when grandfather returned. He carried his black satchel—did he intend to leave, taking all his wealth with him?

He carried his satchel not to the outer door but to the table. He set it down, pushing cup and plate and knife and fork aside. He looked intensely enraged, but not insane. He opened his satchel and took out a little sheaf of papers. His hand shook, but it was from emotion, not from age.

"There!" said he, with a rolling burr. "There!" He thrust into Miss Canfield's hand a few drawings. There was a drawing of the twins, there was a drawing of the bleak hills, there was the drawing of a church steeple, there was a drawing of mother taken from the rear. Miss Canfield choked back a hysterical laugh and covered it quickly. There was a drawing of Florence standing by the sink. Miss Canfield's lip quivered, but not with amusement. She determined to keep this if begging would secure it. Her affection, not often given, was deep.

"Now!" shouted grandfather. "Now! What of my cousin Stanley? What of Gene Tunney? What of legs? What——"

Miss Canfield was thoroughly frightened—was the old man mad, and had she done him harm? Father and mother and Florence, who knew grandfather as a silent man, were appalled.

"Legs the Poles may have!" roared grandfather. "Weight the Italians may have! Assurance the Slovaks may have! But not——" Grandfather held other drawings in his left hand; he struck

them with his right as though he were an orator. Long ago, father remembered, grandfather had been a speaker at meetings; indeed he had helped to organize the first unions. Grandfather was no sheep. "But not"—grandfather hurled out an amazing word; rolling it against the roof of his mouth so that there was a whirring sound like that of a dynamo—"not ar-r-r-t!"

He thrust the pictures toward Miss Canfield; she looked through them all.

"These are the finest things she has done," she said, astonished.

"She!" mocked grandfather. "She!" Grandfather pointed to his own breast.

"Did you do them?" asked Miss Canfield.

"I!" answered grandfather in a still louder voice. He made a sweeping gesture as though he swept whole races from his sight. "I!" said he again.

There was a silence, broken after a long time by two sounds—an infantile crow, a bleating sob. Miss Canfield looked round the circle. Mother sat pale, clutching her infant, her mouth open, fear in her eye. Father's head was lifted; he looked at grandfather as at a hero. Florence—at Florence Miss Canfield did not look. Grandfather removed his satchel from the table and sat down with it resting against his foot.

"She'll stay in school," he announced with the authority of age, of superior intelligence, of great riches.

"She ought to have a quiet place to study," said Miss Canfield quickly.

Grandfather lifted his voice once more in thunder:

"That she shall," he roared, "or she and I will leave!"

QUESTIONS

1. Describe the Kelly family as they appear at breakfast.
2. How did Grandfather Kelly come to be a member of the household?
3. What are your feelings concerning Florence?
4. How do you react toward the character of her mother?
5. Does it seem natural under the circumstances that Florence should be an exceptional student and should desire greatly to remain in school?
6. Is it necessary for Mrs. Kelly to allude so often to the fact that she received little schooling?
7. Is there some part of the story which suggests that grandfather may eventually champion Florence's cause?
8. Do you think that Miss Canfield's visit would have been of any avail had Grandfather not proved to be artistic?
9. Is local color a necessary asset to this story?
10. To whom does the title of the story refer?
11. Is Florence's mother actually cruel, or is her attitude the result wholly of ignorance?
12. How does Florence compare with the normal school girl of fourteen?

VLAD'S SON

BY

KONRAD BERCOVICI

KONRAD BERCOVICI

(1882—)

Konrad Bercovici, an American author, was born in Rumania, where he spent the early years of his life. His education he acquired in the streets of Paris and other European cities. It was not until about the year 1916 that he came to America; since that time he has been a resident of New York City.

Upon his arrival in this country, Bercovici spoke so little English that he could not be understood, and so for a time pretended to be mute. Yet in his more recent writings there is found a quality of English rarely attained by even native writers.

His best-known works are his brilliant gypsy tales, which surpass all existing stories of this type, for Mr. Bercovici has travelled far and wide with gypsies, and knows more of their life, their secrets, and their instincts than any other writer. In fire and beauty "Vlad's Son" is typical of the rest of these tales.

The latest great work of Konrad Bercovici is a vivid story of Alexander the Great. As a young Rumanian he became acquainted with the legends and tales of Alexander, as an American boy knows the achievements of Washington. And in recent years, pursuing his early interest in the character of Alexander, Bercovici travelled through Greece, Turkey, Palestine, Egypt, Persia, and India, following the marches of the great conqueror of twenty-two centuries ago. Everywhere he found in abundance new tales of the accomplishments of Alexander the Great; these tales he now presents in a new and unusual manner.

VLAD'S SON

It was my father's boast that he had half of Europe at his feet. A flat-bottomed rowboat or a spacious log raft was always moored to an iron ring embedded in the rock on which we built our home on the shore of the Danube. And every good Rumanian holds that the Danube is half of Europe.

Back of the house rolled an undulating stretch of pasture-ground, in which roamed the cattle of

the village. It was the common pasture-ground of the community. The cows came there from miles away early every morning and returned home by themselves in time for the evening's milking. Watch-dogs, sure-footed and heavy-coated, did their hereditary duty without any one's paying any special attention to them. Food they had in plenty; the slaughter-house was not far from the pasture.

Twice every year the same stretch did duty as fair-grounds. Early every spring, even before the snow had melted, tents and shanties were put up and for fully ten days before Easter the peasants of our village and the surrounding villages, with their women and children, were in the *khan*—the inn—from early morning to late at night.

At the close of the fair there was not a red copper left in the district. Most of the money had gone to foreign lands. From the Tartars the Rumanian peasants bought young long-horned oxen; from the Russians, furs; long-haired, heavy-mustached Hungarians from Budapest and short-sighted Germans from Leipzig sold them plows and cultivators, and, coming from far America, a Yankee salesman sold brightly colored harvesting-machines, binders and mowers, which attracted considerable attention, not only for themselves but because they were brought from America—from far away, from so far away. . . . This alone gave them a romantic glamour in the eyes of the Rumanians.

The spring fair was the buying-fair, but in the fall, after the cattle were stabled, the wheat threshed and the corn put away in the cribs, the fair-grounds were given over to the selling of the products of the land—wheat, rye, corn, honey, sheep, pigs, cows and horses. The peasants brought all they had to the

yarmarock. The money thus obtained for their products in those ten days was all the income for the year. And those ten days and the ten days after and more, if the summer had been a good one and prices decent, were days of great gayety, with the never-ending music of the *tziganes* and the never-ending flow of newly pressed wine oozing from the wooden wine-press directly into the earthen pitcher, and never-ending dancing, singing and shouting.

Not a day passed without a wedding. It was the month of *Sfintu Dumitru*, the month during which nearly all the weddings of the rural districts of Rumania take place.

The yearly fall fair of Cerna Voda was one of the best known in Rumania. The gypsies swarmed in from all sides. Horse-trading tribes came in their high-wheeled wagons drawn by small Moldavian ponies; coppersmith tribes came on foot, the men carrying the kettles and tongs on their backs and the women in gayly colored dresses embroidered in gold and silver holding the small children on their shoulders and balancing the family belongings, the blankets and the quilts on their heads; while the older children, half-naked and barefooted, marched in droves back of the tribe. Gypsy musicians played the violin and the flute on the road as they marched, quarreling, fighting and holding musical contests under the blue sky on the edge of a forest, with their bare feet dangling in the water of some lake or brook.

And one must not forget the blond Slovaks and Croats, as they came in their furred pants and long sheepskin coats, with heavy rolls of steel and copper wire dangling on their shoulders, working as they walked, twisting the wires into all sorts of useful

things—rat-traps, sieves, rings, dog-collars and clothes-pins, calling out their wares to the empty space by sheer force of habit; docile and patient beasts of burden, known never to grumble, never to rest; in one year traversing Rumania from one end of the Carpathian Mountains to the other and in the following year all the length of the Danube to where the river falls into the Black Sea; lying down to sleep where the night overtook them, in the dust of the road in summer and in hastily built snow-huts in the winter.

To the people of Cerna Voda, in fact to the whole population of the Dobrudja, Vlad's gypsy tribe was one of the best known. All his people, men, women and children, were never referred to by their names. The peasant merely designated them as a Vlad man or a Vlad woman.

Vlad, the chief, was the ruler; his word was law for the fourscore and more people composing his tribe. And before his wrath they all trembled and the strongest of them was cowed by just one glance from Vlad's lone, big dark eye.

The gypsy chief was a tall, straight, well-built man of fifty with long red hair and beard, with a thin black mustache hardly covering a high overlip under a well-lined nose. As lithe and noiseless as a panther in his gait, quiet-spoken, calm, he gave the impression of the born ruler of men, the man who dictated life and death.

He never bartered. But before any deal was closed by any of his men he was consulted, and his word was the last. His knowledge of horses was uncanny, and the peasants were convinced that he could speak to a horse in its language and order it to do just what he wanted.

It was known also that Vlad was the best horse-thief, and because he had never been caught he was held in great respect. No matter how well a horse was guarded, if Vlad had taken a fancy to it the animal disappeared from the stable. And once gone, it was gone forever. And because Vlad stole only the best, it was a compliment to the owner when the lone-eyed, red-headed gypsy chief stole the animal.

That year had been a great one for farmers on the shore of the Danube. There had been plenty of seasonal rain, and when the wheat was ready to be harvested, the sun baked the ground dry. The sheaves had never been heavier; the corn, too, had yielded more than in any other year.

Because of droughts in other places, grain prices were so high that after the fall fair was over each peasant had more money in his pockets than he had ever had before. There were not enough musicians to play at all the weddings that took place, and each wedding feast lasted at least three days. The *tziganes*, the musicians, *lautars*, worked themselves to death, snatching bits of sleep on their feet as they played the interminable waltzes and *doinas* for the joyous youths.

In the thick of this joy, on a Friday, Vlad's tribe arrived from the Black Sea. Much to the chagrin of his son, Radu, who was in love with Anica, the daughter of the innkeeper of Cerna Voda, the chief had miscalculated the time and the tribe was too late for the fair. But because men and beasts were tired Vlad decided to pitch camp on the fair-grounds and rest. They had with them some very fine horses and some black sheep they had brought from Astrakhan to sell for breeding.

The peasant youth had arranged a horse-race for the following Sunday. Among the riders was Tudor, the mayor's son, on a little chestnut filly of his. She was the pride of the village. Mara, the filly, won the race before she started from the post. If the others partook in the race at all, it was to see how far behind the filly they could run.

The eyes of every one were on the little animal, which stowed away space and air and seemed, with her outstretched neck and fuming nostrils, to be thirsty for more and more space to conquer.

After the race was over the whole village surrounded Tudor and his horse. The men shook hands with the young man, the women covered him with flowers and the young girls braided colored ribbons taken from their own hair into the mane of the little filly. Vlad, the gypsy, stood at a distance, outside the circle of Tudor's friends.

From the instant his eye had taken in the sweep of the little mare's shape he had thought of nothing else. He had never owned a horse he liked so well. Not even that black stallion, Stica, for whom the whole tribe mourned when he died.

Vlad had thought Stica to be his last love, that his heart would never more go out to a horse, and suddenly that little filly caught his eye and awoke his inherent slumbering passion—a passion which only those of gypsy blood can understand.

Unable to hold out any longer, the gypsy chief approached the beaming Tudor and throwing his arm round the horse's neck he brought out the right hand from his pocket full of gold, and said:

"Take it all, and give me the horse, Tudor, son of Miron."

Tudor trembled as he pushed away the handful of gold.

"This horse is not for sale, man. Take your gold away and don't tempt me."

The offer of a handful of gold was a great compliment, coming as it did from Vlad, the best horseman in Rumania, but the boy loved the horse and he knew that the innkeeper's daughter, Anica, would never forgive him if he ever parted with Mara. He knew how passionately she loved the horse, and he also knew that if she had consented to marry him instead of Radu, Vlad's son, it was only because he was the owner of Mara.

"This horse is not for sale, Vlad," he repeated again and again, as he pushed the proffered gold away.

The gypsy, still with his left arm round Mara's neck, called to one of his men and spoke a few words to him in his own language. The man dashed away to the chief's tent. The peasants watched the transaction. Vlad fixed his lone eye on Tudor, and the boy fidgeted with the fringes of his red sash and repeated:

"It's not for sale, Vlad. It's not for sale. You don't understand, Vlad. I can't sell this horse."

The gypsy messenger returned with two leather pouches, holding one in each hand. Vlad called Tudor nearer to him.

"Open your hands, boy," he called out, and as Tudor did so he poured gold-pieces from the pouch into the cupped palms.

"Is that enough?" he asked, when one of the pouches was empty.

Tudor raised his eyebrows and looked at the peasants who stood with mouths agape at the sight of so much gold. No one said a word. Tudor was vacillating, when he suddenly saw Anica coming on a run from the inn.

Flushed, perspiring, the clean-limbed, dark-eyed daughter of a gypsy woman and a Rumanian father rushed up to the boy and with her breath still hot she asked:

"You did not, did you?"

His hands were full of gold and Vlad's hands were round the filly's neck.

"No, I did not, Anica," he answered.

"Then why does Vlad hold the horse? Let go of Mara, Vlad," she said, trying to pry his arm loose. "And you, Tudor, give him back his gold, or all is broken between us."

"Oh, I see," Vlad remarked. "This is Anica, the innkeeper's daughter, is it not? Where is Radu? Is he not with you? He was so anxious to come to Cerna Voda—because of you. Or is this not Anica, the innkeeper's daughter?"

"So she is," the peasants echoed.

"Well, well, look how fast she has grown!" Vlad continued in an oily voice. "And Tudor is—bless me, bless me—and I thought she was in love with my son, Radu—bless me, bless me—— The ways of women, the ways of women!"

"I will have none of your Radu; I will have none of your people—puppets without a will of their own, who forever depend on what Vlad will say or do," Anica shouted at him. "And do please let go of that horse and go God's way. Let go, I say," she screamed, as she tried to lead the horse away. "Let go, let go."

Vlad looked at her.

"Hold out your hands, Anica," he ordered, and as she obeyed, without thinking, the gypsy chief emptied all the gold of the second pouch into her cupped hands.

"And I shall pay all the wedding expenses besides," he announced, winking to the peasants, "and I will have to buy a beautiful girl for my son, Radu—one more beautiful than you, Anica, if possible."

People looked at one another, not daring to say a word lest the spell be broken. Tudor looked pleadingly at his flushed gypsy girl. So much gold all at once for a horse! It was a fortune. She met his gaze with contempt.

"No, Vlad, that horse is not for sale. As for the wedding expenses, I give thanks to the Lord that I am not an orphan. Take your gold," and before Vlad had time to utter another word, she emptied her hands, made Tudor empty his into the gypsy's coat pocket, and with one jump she was on the horse and up and away from the fair-grounds.

Vlad, pale and shaking as with the ague, looked to the perplexed Tudor, shrugged his shoulders and gave a short laugh. Then he left the crowd to enter his tent. The peasants surrounded the excited boy.

"You'd better get the money, Tudor, and let him have the horse."

"When Vlad wants a horse, he gets it," said the village priest. "We know that, don't we, people?"

"Yes, he has a way with horses. He casts a spell over them and they evaporate from the stable like thin air. You may guard the stable day and night, and the horse disappears. He bewitches them," explained another man.

"He does, he does," many assented.

"Have you not seen how he looked at the little filly? Who knows but what the two spoke together when he had his arm around her? Who knows? Who knows?"

"Nonsense," said young Tudor. "It's my horse

and I won't sell it. Have I not as much right to own the horse as a *tzigane*? What?"

"The truth of the matter is," explained Jonica, the oldest inhabitant of Cerna Voda, "that Anica does not want him to sell the horse. You know, Anica, really—because of her mother's blood—When they love a horse they sacrifice everything, are ready to do anything—trample upon others and even destroy themselves for a horse, for a particular horse."

"Have you not heard?" remarked another man. "She marries Tudor instead of Radu because Tudor owns the horse, and Vlad, Vlad is ready to break his son's heart for the same horse. Ah, these gypsies!"

Nothing else was talked about at the inn.

All the horse-lore of hundreds of years was reviewed, and it was agreed that the price Vlad had offered was the weight in gold of that little filly. And as the wine mounted to the heads of the peasants, bets were laid as to whether Vlad would get the horse or not.

Anica, barefooted, fleet-limbed, dressed in a long white shirt of linen belted at the waist, served the drinks at the tables.

"No, the horse is not for sale," she said in answer to all inquiries.

"But, girl, you know very well that if Vlad wants the horse nothing will stand in his way. You know that, don't you? And is it fair to Radu to leave him for Tudor because of a horse?" asked old Jonica, the village's story-teller. "And Vlad will get the horse anyhow."

"Nonsense. Tudor will hold watch day and night," the innkeeper's daughter interrupted him,

"and he can shoot straight. As to Radu, you don't understand, Tata Jonica, you don't understand. He is only a puppet, not a man. He should have been here four weeks ago. Why did he not come in time?"

"He did not. He did not come because his father had willed otherwise. He, Radu, has no will of his own. That's it, Tata Jonica."

"Just like her mother, Reposata, may she rest in peace," muttered the old peasant to himself as he watched Anica rush from table to table. "Ah, that gypsy blood, that tempestuous blood!"

"Ah, youth, youth," the older peasants laughed. "Tudor will watch over the horse! As if it mattered. Vlad will call and it will come. He once bewitched a horse, and it came to him when he called—came riding through space on a broomstick."

The village split into two factions. One believed that the gypsy would get the horse, and the other that he would not. They said that Tudor and Anica were a match for any gypsy.

That very evening a dozen youths offered to stand watch at night to relieve Tudor. One climbed on the roof, armed to the teeth; two young boys posted themselves in the stall, and the four sides of the stable were guarded by two men on each side with a sentinel pacing up and down two hundred feet away. For it was known that Vlad's cunning was much above the ordinary. At midnight the guard was changed, and at daylight the whole village was at the *khan* to inquire about the horse. Was Mara still there?

Vlad, too, came in and was followed by his son, Radu. The young gypsy, the image of his father, walked up to Anica, and leaning far over the bar, he spoke to her.

"So that was behind all you said to me yesterday? *Hein*, Anica? So that's what you did, Anica? Because of a horse you threw me over for the mayor's son. What is he more than I am, I ask? Is he stronger than I am? Is he richer? What? As if I could not give you a horse just as beautiful! What?"

"No," answered Anica, "you could not keep a horse if your father ordered it sold, and for so much gold, too. He, he is his own master, not a puppet of his father as you are. You are not even known by your own name. You are known only as 'Vlad's son.' Fancy how they would call me 'Vlad's son's wife.' Phew!" and she spat on the floor and threw back her head as she showed a row of glittering white teeth.

"Vlad is a chief, but he is my father," Radu answered. "I am sure that he would not be against giving you whatever you want if I asked."

"Not at all," retorted Anica. "Only yesterday he offered to pay the expenses of the wedding between Tudor and myself if I would let him have the horse."

Radu bit his underlip and kept quiet.

"And you are all, all of you, sheep, cowards. Tudor is a man. I never knew it until yesterday. Four handfuls of gold for a horse, and when I said 'No,' he did not have to ask his father. No it was."

"Much of a man, the man who does what a woman wants," sneered the young gypsy.

"But he did not have to ask his father. He did it because I wanted. He did it to please me. To please me," and she beat her heart proudly as she looked defiantly at him.

She served drinks to a few people. When she was free again Radu leaned over the counter and spoke once more.

She did not answer. She remembered long walks in the night—kisses, embraces, promises——

He looked into her eyes as he drank the full quart-pitcher of wine in one draft.

"And suppose he would have sold the horse, what then?" he inquired. "Suppose he loses the horse, Anica? Suppose he loses the horse?"

"There is not enough gold in the whole world to buy that horse from Tudor, and he guards it with his life," she replied to the subtle proposition made by the young gypsy.

Vlad, who sat all alone at a table, heard the words of the girl and snickered. The gypsy girl looked at him and trembled.

"You had better advise Tudor to take the money," whispered a newly arrived customer in the girl's ear.

"Keep quiet, you drunken weakling," she snapped.

Marin, the innkeeper, came in from the back door. His eyes were still heavy with sleep. He yawned as he took a long drink of prune-juice to put himself in shape for the day's work and offered the bottle afterward to his customers.

"Good morning, Vlad. Here is his son, too, grown big and strong. Take a sip, take a sip. Here, it's a man's drink."

Anica looked at Radu, as much as to say:

"Do you hear how they call you?" and the boy bent his head in shame.

While they were talking Tudor came in with his father. The mayor, Miron, shook hands with the gypsy chief; they were old friends—had swapped horses many a time, had drunk from the same glass in token of friendship.

"Glad to see you, Vlad."

"Glad to see you, Miron," Vlad answered, as he made room for the mayor at the table.

"Marin, bring a fresh pitcher and give wine to the men."

Vlad and the mayor drank quietly and spoke about the harvest, the fair and the prices of wheat and corn. The mayor had an inquisitive mind and wanted to know news and gossip of other places; wanted to know about the Tartar chief who had been killed by one of his women in Cocosh, fifty miles from Cerna, and about the new bridge that was thrown over the Danube.

Vlad knew all about everything, because he traveled. Miron read about the happenings in the only newspaper, which came once a week to the village and which he used to explain to the assembled peasants in front of the little church on Sundays after services.

Excepting the priest, he was the only man who could read—with great difficulty, it is true, and half the words used by the writers were a mystery to him, but he could get the drift of what he read and translate it into the flowery language of the Rumanian peasants—the old Latin dialect, ornamented with Greek, Turkish and Russian.

Radu and Tudor stood leaning against the counter. Both were being served by the innkeeper's dark-eyed, dark-haired daughter. Each talked to her without looking at the other. Without any exchange of words a drinking-contest was started between the two. Such contests ended only when one of the contestants fell to the floor, dead to the world around him.

"A pitcher of last year's wine," ordered Tudor.

"And of the same for me," ordered Radu, and both young men gulped down the blood-red juice in one draft.

It was a contest not only of quantity but one of speed also. The peasants looked on and got ready to take up wagers.

"Another one," demanded Tudor.

"Here, too," motioned Radu.

"Here, Anica," motioned the mayor's son, as he gave the empty pitcher again to the girl.

"Here, too, and bring me a two-quart pitcher this time," the gypsy boy ordered.

Anica hesitated. In a drinking-contest the same measure was served to the contestants. It was an old rule. And Radu was strong. He could drink, she knew that.

"Just bring him a pitcher the same as mine," Tudor spoke excitedly as he straightened up.

"I asked for a double pitcher," insisted Radu, as his fingers coiled around the hilt of his knife, which protruded over the broad red belt.

He looked only at the girl, facing her across the counter.

"Give what I ordered."

The mayor and the gypsy chief had watched the contest between their sons from their seats on a bench behind a table on the farther end of the wall. They were watching the contest with extraordinary intensity, which they screened with talk about crops and travel.

But the moment Radu had grasped the hilt of his knife and the peasants had drawn in a circle to make room for the fight, Vlad jumped up and yelled to his son:

"Return to your tent!"

Radu's fingers uncoiled from the knife, his arm dropped limply by his side and he prepared to leave. He looked into the lone eye of his father as he re-

treated from the counter. He looked again at his father and at the girl, and as the door framed his erect body, he called out:

"Father, you have gone too far."

Then he laughed and stepped out into the road.

"That's what I call a father's rule," spoke an old peasant.

"Radu is just a plain coward," said Anica, as she went on with her work. "No man could order me around that way. And he is a man! Calls himself a man, ha!"

A week passed and then another week, and the horse was still in Tudor's stable. The youth of the village watched over it day and night. After the second week Vlad could no longer enter the inn without being jeered at. That it should take him so long to make good the silent threat was a sign of decay. He was getting old, too old.

Everybody looked at him with contempt. The people who had bet that he would get the horse wondered that he, Vlad, should have lost his cunning, and the young men who watched the horse openly laughed at him.

"Vlad's other eye was the better one," they said to one another, loud enough for the gypsy chief to hear.

He had lost his other eye in a fight with a Tartar whom he had killed.

His own people, too, began to lose faith in him and no longer feared their ruler. Several deals were closed by his son, Radu, without his permission. It was an unprecedented infringement of his law. But his son grew more and more daring.

Vlad had met Radu late at night hovering around

the stable where the filly was kept, and although he had ordered him away he had met him there again and again and had to make believe that he did not see him at all.

The gypsies asked one another why they were still staying in Cerna Voda. Through Vlad's miscalculation they had missed the fair, and now they were missing the great fair at Constanza on the Black Sea. All because he had become infatuated with a horse.

Of course, they knew what such passion meant. Each one of them had at some time or other been attracted to some beautiful animal, and each one's heart had been broken. Some of the horses had died, others became crippled and were shot in mercy, and still others were sold at the orders of Vlad when some big price was offered. For Stica, the stallion he had loved so much, Vlad had given away every pet horse and almost all the gold of the tribe; even to the *salbas*, necklaces, the women had worn.

They could never forget or forgive that. He was a passionate man, Vlad was. His passions were his strength. And he broke every other man's passion for women or horses as soon as it was manifested, lest one of them grow strong with the rising greed and dare oppose his rule when occasion offered.

Only the ruler had a right to strong passions. Such was his dictum. And now a slip of a girl was opposing him! He knew, and his people knew, that Tudor did not count. And if the will of a girl were stronger than his passion, than his cunning, he was no longer fit to rule.

All this was now muttered of and spoken about under their breaths. It was time he was called to account. He was a great chief and all that, but

every once in a while all they had saved in years was given away in a day to satisfy one of his whims.

And he broke every one's heart. Nothing was sacred before the fire of his passion. The gypsies grumbled, but no one dared say a word before the face of the chief.

Vlad grew thinner every day.

From that Russian general in Bessarabia, whose stables were guarded by armed soldiers day and night, he had stolen the best horse. The general called him into his room afterward and gave him hundreds of gold-pieces. Vlad recalled how the officer's hands shook as he begged.

"It was the horse which the Czar has mounted, the horse which the Czar has mounted! I shall have to commit suicide if it is lost."

He returned the horse and ever since the general had been his best friend. And now whatever plan he laid was thwarted by Anica, one of his own people on her mother's side.

But never had he loved a horse so much as he loved that little filly, and never before had his reputation or his rule been at stake. It was a fatal day on which he had seen Mara. The whole affair had gone too far. He could never rule his people if he were to give it up. Radu and some others were already defying his authority.

And the peasants made fun of him! On the Sunday after the first snowfall of the year a young peasant came up to him on an old nag and in mock seriousness offered the nag for sale to the gypsy.

"You see, Vlad, I have decided that as a great chief you are entitled to own the best horse in the country."

He had become the joke of the village. Vlad

could see that in the eyes of the innkeeper and his daughter. Miron, the mayor, smiled every time he saw him. Only some of the oldest peasants were not convinced of the gypsy's defeat. The priest said it every evening at the inn, as he drank his last glass before retiring.

"Vlad will get the horse. The young pups will soon grow lax. He bides his time. You will see, Vlad will get the horse."

But the young peasants did not intend to grow lax. The old barn was fitted out with tables, benches, barrels and pitchers, and soon became the meeting-place of the boys and girls of the village. Anica was there every night and her laughter could be heard above the din and noise.

Tudor was the host. His little mustache was waxed now every morning until its points were like needles, just to show his pride and insolence. To taunt Vlad he rode his horse up to the gypsy's tent one Sunday.

"How do you like my little filly, Vlad? She is not bad to look at, ha?"

On the fourth Sunday after the fair the priest announced the wedding of Tudor and Anica.

Radu managed to see the girl alone. He begged her to marry him instead. How could she throw him over like that?

But Anica sneered:

"Marry you? You! And have your father order you, 'Return to your tent,' when a man insults you! I marry a *man*. A man who is his own master. A man who refuses handfuls of gold for a horse, when I love the horse, and who knows how to guard the horse even against Vlad. That's the *man* I marry. Nobody will ever speak about him as the 'mayor's

son.' You could not keep the horse against your father's orders. You could not keep me against his orders. You are afraid of him. You would not dare to do anything without his permission. How can a woman love, marry you? How could she?"

She said this and many other things, even if her heart were not as set as her tongue was cutting.

Radu was handsomer and stronger than Tudor. There were things about him she liked. Her blood echoed to his. But she hated his slavish submission to Vlad. Why did he not act like a man? She had heard of at least one occasion when Vlad took to his tent the bride of another man on the wedding day, just to assert his rule.

The young gypsy cried. He showed her the tree near which he had first kissed her. He reminded her how she had sworn love to him and how she had taken him away from Maria, the blacksmith's daughter. But she would not hear of it.

No, she was going to marry a man who was called by his own name and not after his father. A man who could keep a horse she loved, who could refuse handfuls of gold.

"Handfuls of gold, handfuls of gold," she repeated.

A man who dared, who was brave and cunning, who could guard what he had, what she loved.

The conversation between the two had taken place on a Wednesday evening. The wedding between Anica and Tudor was to take place on the following Sunday. The *khangiu*, the innkeeper, engaged the best musicians. It was to be one of the most lavish wedding feasts. From Sunday to Sunday. The whole *khan* was decorated with colored papers and holly and paper lanterns of all kinds. In the kitchen

a dozen women prepared viands and spicy food for the men.

It was to be such a feast as the village had never seen. No limit to the quantity of wine and brandy. Wedding presents for the couple were piled up against two walls. On one wall, what the women had given—the best of their looms, rolls of homespun linen and coarse silk, *borangick*, that had been blanched for months in the sun. Mats, rugs, embroidered towels and folds upon folds of narrow belts of silk, *betele*, that hold together the two halves of the peasant women's skirts.

And leaning against the other wall, visible to all, were the presents of the men, each piece separate—pistols of all makes, knives with silver and ivory hilts, guns, long Turkish swords, *yataghans*, fur coats, fur hats, boots, pipes, cartridge-belts. Oh, they were not niggardly, the men of Cerna Voda, and God had been good to them that year!

And just after the public exhibit of it all, and as the last few benches were placed, early in the morning on Sunday, Tudor fell headlong at the door of the inn, pale and shaking.

He had just enough strength left to blurt out, "The horse, the horse——"

"The horse what?" yelled Anica as she shook his limp arm.

"The horse—the horse——" the boy tried to explain.

"Tell me what has happened—is she killed? Did she die? What? Tell me," Anica begged, between sobs of anger. "Tell me, Tudor, tell me, tell me!"

But Tudor was becoming incoherent in his speech. He only repeated: "The horse—the horse."

Leaving Tudor prostrated on the floor, Anica

darted away to the stable of the filly. It was empty.

In a few minutes the inn was beleaguered. The priest passed by on his way to church. After he had heard, he went no farther. He knew nobody would come to church. The excitement was too intense. The horse had disappeared from the stable. How? When? No one knew. The young men who had been in charge of the night watch had ridden away to find the horse, vowing they would never return without Mara.

When the excitement was at its highest, Vlad came rushing to the inn. The older peasants gave him a rousing welcome. The younger ones looked to him with a mixture of awe and contempt. A supernatural being, Vlad, the great chief. A sorcerer!

"Vlad is *still* Vlad," said the priest. "You thought you knew better, *hein?*"

Jonica slapped the gypsy chief on his broad shoulders.

"Well, well, it was *we* against *them*," he said, showing the older men on one side and the young men on the other.

"But what does it all mean?" asked Vlad.

"It's about the horse, you know," said Marin, the innkeeper, clinking glasses and laughing his broadest.

"What has happened to the horse?" the gypsy yelled with all the strength of his lungs.

"Come on, come, come, we are good sports," said several peasants as they dragged the gypsy toward the counter. "The best wine here, Marin."

Vlad tore himself away with one jerk and rushed to the dejected Tudor.

"What's the matter with the horse, you young good-for-nothing?"

"Stolen, stolen, stolen," and he spat in disgust.

The older peasants laughed at the comedy, and the priest forgot all dignity and swung his hat and giggled——

"Look at Vlad; look at him!"

In a moment there was pandemonium in the inn. Anica, on coming back from the stable, threw herself at the chief's feet and begged him to return to her the horse.

"It is my horse," she cried.

He looked hard at her.

She screamed that it was because of Mara that she had agreed to marry Tudor. It was her horse. Her horse.

Vlad swore that he knew nothing about it. His face twitched and changed colors until it turned a sickly green, as if it were bruised from the inside. He threw himself on the bench near the crying Tudor and he, too, sobbed.

They did not believe him. Jonica and the priest his staunchest admirers, least of all. The mayor came in and laughed as he shook the limp hands of the chief.

"Good work! I told you, Tudor, that sooner or later, he would get the filly."

"But I did not, Miron. I swear I did not."

They laughed. Ah, Vlad was having some fun!

Soon all the gypsies were in the inn.

They laughed and made much noise.

"Drinks here. Vlad is *still* Vlad."

What did they think of him, *hein*? Watch a horse when he wanted it! There was no better man in the country, in the world.

Vlad was sick of denying that he knew anything about the horse. Anica swore that the wedding was

called off; that she would never marry a man who could not watch a horse.

During one of her passionate outbursts Radu entered the inn. His twinkling eye met the gaze of the innkeeper's daughter and she trembled from head to foot when he left the inn as unobserved as he had entered it. Vlad saw his son leave and prepared to leave also.

"Listen here," said the mayor. "Return the horse. We shall settle that later."

"I know nothing about the horse," answered Vlad, and fell limply on a chair. "I wish to God I did."

All eyes were turned on the two men. The mayor was not fair. One should not speak to Vlad in that way. One could read in their eyes that such was the thought in the heart of the peasants. No. One should not speak that way to Vlad.

"I will put you in chains, Vlad. The joke has gone too far. Show us where you have hidden the horse," and the mayor tried to assert his authority.

"I know nothing about the horse," assured Vlad, and his voice, broken and feeble, trembled.

"It's time for the wedding," broke in the priest in a conciliatory tone, as he placed himself between the two men. "We shall speak about horses later."

Tudor got up from his chair.

"There will be no wedding." Anica stamped her foot and beat the table with her hands. "The man I marry must be a *man*."

She had hardly finished the last word when Radu, mounted on the stolen filly, rode to the door of the inn.

"Mayor," he yelled, "leave the poor old man in peace. It is I who took the horse," and before any one could say a word Anica had jumped up behind him on the chestnut filly.

"Eat the wedding feast by yourselves. We will get married in the church of the next village."

Vlad left the inn, staggering on his feet like a drunkard.

"So he did it! He, he, he!"

Radu now had found strength and cunning in his passion. It was all over, all over!

When Radu returned to Cerna Voda the following day, his father had disappeared. He, Vlad, refused to be known merely as Radu's father.

And the people made merry, sang, drank and danced for seven days and seven nights. Yea, they sang and danced and drank for seven days and seven nights!

QUESTIONS

1. Describe the fair at Cerna Voda.
2. What was the purpose of the fairs held there twice yearly?
3. What sort of man was Vlad?
4. What were the characteristics of the tribe over which he ruled?
5. Does Vlad's desire for the horse seem to you exaggerated?
6. Why did Tudor refuse to sell the mare to Vlad?
7. Describe the town of Cerna Voda as you picture it.
8. What characteristics of Vlad's son and Anica are revealed in their first interview?
9. Contrast the Rumanian peasant with the gypsy.
10. Are the relations existing between these two friendly or otherwise? Does this seem natural?
11. In what light do the peasants view the gypsies' thieving?
12. Contrast Vlad with Miron.
13. Does it appear that the author is relying on actual knowledge of times and conditions, or is the material entirely fictitious?
14. What does the character of the village priest add to the story?
15. Write or tell some brief experience you have had with gypsies. Present some phase of gypsy life with which

you are familiar through your reading or through observation.

16. What have you learned from this story about gypsies?
17. What means does the author employ to gain your sympathy and admiration for the gypsies?
18. Viewed in a less romantic light, is the gypsies' life actually an attractive one? State your reasons for thinking as you do.
19. Do you know the names of the two books about gypsies that are most famous and the name of the man who wrote them?

TALK

BY

HUGH MACNAIR KAHLER

HUGH MACNAIR KAHLER

(1883-)

Mr. Kahler was born in Philadelphia, Pa. His early life, however, centers about a farm in western New York State. It was here that he gathered the settings, characters, and material for nearly all that he has ever written.

His present home is in Princeton, New Jersey, near enough to the campus of the college to enable him to take active interest in the college activities.

His early farm environment has been a dominant factor in Mr. Kahler's life. Much that he has written shows his knowledge and understanding of the soil, and his love for farming.

Concerning the story, "Talk," Mr. Kahler says: "I am sorry that I can't tell you where the story started. The setting and characters are drawn from my rustic youth, but the action is invented, and to my taste, not very convincing."

Mr. Kahler was graduated from Princeton in 1904. He states that he is "the husband of one wife and the father of one daughter."

Following are a few of his short stories:

Alive and Single	Cousin Benjamin
Catastrophe	Horse and Buggy
Bottom of the Well	Salvage
Tether	Shining Armor
Trodden Dust	Easy

TALK

The breakfast which greeted Mr. Alfred Porson when he came downstairs at half-past three deserved a kindlier eye than that with which he contemplated it. The wedge of apple pie was noble of dimension and so was the yellow cube of cheese which shared its plate; the glass pitcher of buttermilk had been filled to within an inch of its capacity, and there was a platter of newly fried crullers, each delicately dusted with a rime of powdered sugar.

It was a meal wholly adequate to the heartening of a man for sterner tasks than those which lay in wait for Mr. Porson. It was, moreover, of his own choosing, and there was ingratitude as well as injustice in the discontent with which he dedicated himself to its absorption.

Finishing the last of the crullers he sighed and rose. The melancholy aspect of his countenance deepened a little as he peered past the edge of the swinging door and confirmed a premonition that pantry and kitchen were untenanted. This was altogether usual. During the interval between dinner dish washing and the preliminaries of supper, Mrs. Dobie and Olga, the hired girl, were pretty sure to forsake the scene of their activities; but the circumstance, nevertheless, darkened the gloom of Mr. Porson's neatly shaven face.

"Seems 's though they done it a-puppose," he informed himself. The sound of his voice seemed to comfort him. He continued to talk, under his breath, as he went out to the peace of the empty street, drowsing in the shadowy heat below the tall immobile elms. He eyed the solitude with disfavor. "Yes, sir, seems 's though it was against the law f'r folks to be around where a body c'n talk to 'em, what little time he ain't asleep or night watchin'."

He turned into the wider reach of Main Street. Here a rank of cars stood parked diagonally against each curb, and there was a certain tempered activity in spite of the downpour of sun. Mr. Porson brightened. Hopefully, as Eben Whipple approached him, he paused and prepared a remark about the heat; but Eb, with only a nod and mutter, passed by quickly.

Mr. Porson had no better luck with other encounters. Reluctantly he moved past the store and the post office, the deserted, sun-stricken porch of the hotel, the barred windows and locked door of the bank, and came to a hesitant, wistful pause opposite the striped pole before the barber shop.

It stood on the shadier side of the street, and he was able to discern, in its inviting dimness, the presence of human beings in repose. Slowly, as if against his will, he crossed toward it.

Les McVitty, his sleeves withdrawn under gay arm garters, looked up from professional attention to a horizontal face heavily masked with lather. His own countenance, plump and glistening, assumed an expression sullenly forbidding. "Told you I didn't want you hangin' around here, didn't I?" he demanded.

Mr. Porson fingered the coins in his pocket and, not without dignity, seated himself in one of the chairs that stood along the wall. "I come in f'r a haircut," he announced firmly.

"Don't need it," snapped Les. "Had one las' Satd'y."

"Guess I c'n have another if I pay f'r it," said Mr. Porson. He leaned back and inhaled deeply of air upon which, mingled with a blended fragrance of bay rum and tobacco, some faint aroma of conversation seemed to linger; he looked about him. Dan Storey, of course, slouched at the window, one leg draped over the arm of his chair, a frayed copy of his favorite pink weekly on his lap. Mr. Porson nodded to him with a certain uneasiness and shifted his glance to the stranger who occupied the other side of the show window.

Here, manifestly, was a visitor from the outer

world. Mr. Porson regarded him attentively, with respect due to his raiment and the indefinable aura of sophistication that surrounded him—a drummer, probably, voyaging grandly, seeing and hearing without stint or limit. He smoked a cigarette, his eye observant and amused.

Dan Storey, manifestly stimulated by the presence of alien attention, proceeded to justify Mr. Porson's apprehensions. He showed his gold tooth in his indolent grin. "Bought any more oil stock, Al?"

Mr. Porson winced.

"'Most wore out that one, ain't you, Dan? Guess if a man sees fit to take a chance now and then, it's his own business. Besides, they might hit oil yet in that there well. Guess you'd laugh out the other side of your mouth if that's how it turned out."

He listened unhappily while Dan related the venture to the stranger. It was Les McVitty who interposed, presently, a veto on the completion of the narrative.

"F'r the land's sake, Dan, ain't you told that chestnut often enough?" His voice was heavy with grievance. "Wish't I'd never started in the barberin' business. Get talked deaf in it, a body does."

Mr. Porson's eyes glistened. "Be glad to hear a mite of talk if you was night watchin'," he suggested timidly. McVitty glowered at him. Some measure of his irritation expressed itself in the movement of his razor, so that the man in the chair mumbled apprehensively through the lather.

"Told you I didn't want your trade," said the barber. "What little I make off you don't pay me f'r havin' to listen while the boys kid you. Any time you come in here you start more racket 'n a worm in a henhouse."

Mr. Porson accepted the ungracious speech with humility. He transferred his gaze to the stranger. There was a moment of silence, disturbed only by the sound, rhythmically resentful, of Les McVitty's razor. Even Dan Storey, for once, seemed unmoved to witticism at Mr. Porson's acquiescent expense. He sprawled in his chair, the pink weekly rising and sinking to his breathing.

Mr. Porson, with a wary side glance toward McVitty, leaned forward. "Traveling man, ain't you?" he inquired.

The stranger regarded him soberly and shook his head.

"Not exactly," he said. "Do some traveling, but it's only part of my business. Spend most of my time in the factory."

"I want to know!" Mr. Porson's tone implied that the information vastly interested him. He edged his chair a little nearer, and his tongue moistened his lips. "What kind of a fact'ry?"

The stranger's eye moved briefly to encounter that of Dan Storey. "Horse factory," he said, his voice matter-of-fact. Dan Storey sat up. McVitty, making an impatient, rasping noise in his throat, again expressed his disapproval in razored emphasis. The man in the chair lifted a protesting hand. Mr. Porson, however, inched his chair still nearer.

"Horse fact'ry?"

"Yes." The stranger nodded. "I'm a horse carver by trade."

Dan Storey slapped his knee softly, but Mr. Porson paid no heed. "Want to know! A horse carver, you say? Dunno's I ever heard of no such trade till now."

"That's funny. Used to be a lot of us in the old

days." The stranger shook his head gloomily. "Not many of us left in the business now, of course, but there was a time when a good horse carver could write out his own pay check. Carved hundreds of 'em, I have—see 'em anywhere you went. Used to be one in every harness store. Guess you've seen plenty of my horses in your time—common as wooden Indians in front of cigar stores, they used to be."

Mr. Porson nodded, enlightened and intensely interested, so that he paid no attention to the all but stifled sounds escaping from below the palm which Dan Storey now pressed against his mouth.

"Sure enough. Used to be a sight of 'em. Tom Linkletter, right here in Unionville, he used to have one in the front of his store before he failed up and went in the shoe business. Life-size, it was, and painted dapple gray."

"I carved it." The other man nodded with an effect of regretful pride. "Well, it's all changed now. If it wasn't for the merry-go-round end of the business, I'd starve to death. Guess that won't last much longer, either—getting so the kids aren't satisfied to ride wooden horses any more. They want aeroplanes and ostriches and elephants nowadays."

"Well, you can carve them, can't you?" Mr. Porson suggested. The other shook his head.

"Once a horse carver," he declared, "always a horse carver. When the time comes when I have to carve ostriches I'll quit."

Mr. Storey snickered outright at this point, but Mr. Porson was too fascinated to notice his mirth. He clicked his tongue sympathetically. "It's a terrible pity. Sounds like it'd be a real interestin' business too. Better'n night watchin' anyways." He

wagged his head over his own troubles now. "Meanest trade there is, I claim."

"How do you make that out?" the stranger challenged. "Always looked like a cinch to me."

"It ain't though. No, sir. You set up all night without nobody to keep you comp'ny and nothin' to keep you busy neither. Don't never find out how much time there is to a minute till you try night watchin'. And you get through right when folks are gettin' up and swallerin' their breakfast and hustlin' off to work, so there ain't nobody to talk to. You got to sleep, because there ain't nothin' else to do, and when you wake up, round this time o' day, it ain't much better. A body gets so he most forgets he's got a tongue."

"You ain't," said McVitty bitterly.

"Don't aim to." Mr. Porson bore the implied affront serenely. "Aim to talk any time I get a chance. Get all the quiet I c'n use over to the bank nights."

"Don't use none in the daytime," said McVitty.

Mr. Porson turned upon him gravely. "Don't know when you're well off, Les. Man gets to hear some talk in most any business but night watchin', but barberin'——" He inhaled wistfully. "Guess it's about the best of all."

"Sell you the shop dirt cheap any time you want it," snapped Les. "Don't seem to be no way to keep you out of it."

"Wouldn't ask nothin' better, if I could get hold of the money." Mr. Porson sighed. "Bet I'd make a succeed of it too. You c'n shave an' cut hair first-rate, Les, but that ain't only part of the barber business, way I look at it. Man might 's well shave himself as come in a shop where he don't hear

nothing only a razor gettin' stropped. No, sir, folks come in here to get talked to, Les."

"Ain't disappointed if you're round. Get a dollar's wuth f'r ten cents." McVitty tilted the chair upright and polished the face of his customer with dismal energy. "You go and talk somebody else deaf, hear me? Put up with your gab long enough."

Mr. Porson rose with dignity. "All right, if that's how you feel, Les. All I got to say is——"

He retreated before the menace of an uplifted bay-rum bottle. Immensely to his satisfaction the stranger elected to accompany him into exile. "Guess I won't wait, either," he said. "Come on over to the hotel. Got to hang round till train time."

Mr. Porson needed no urging. In the relative coolness of the empty office he accepted a gay-belted cigar and was gratified by the respectful attention with which his discourse on the art and science of night watchmanship was received by the intelligent horse carver. Even after Dan Storey joined the party, he was not only permitted to talk but even encouraged, on the part of the stranger, by interest and prompting inquiry.

He described in detail the new vault and the time lock on its massive door, the modern system of wiring which protected every window and door of the building after business hours, his own appointed round of inspection, registered on the recording watchman's clock. The horse carver wondered mildly at these precautions, seemingly excessive for the size of the institution, and Mr. Porson made it clear to him that appearances were misleading—the bank carried a lot of cash right along; twice a month when the hands were paid off at the mills, over by the creek, this amount was heavily increased. He il-

lustrated certain portions of his description by means of crude sketches on the margin of his hearer's newspaper.

Several times Dan Storey endeavored to reintroduce the topic of horse carving, but the exponent of that art discouraged these efforts as persistently as did Mr. Porson himself, and presently Storey slouched across to the blacksmith shop, whence, after a little, a guffawing chorus bore testimony to his success as an entertainer. At train time Mr. Porson accompanied his new acquaintance to the station. They shook hands cordially on the platform.

"Glad to've met you," said the horse carver heartily. "Any time you're in the city be sure to look me up."

Mr. Porson promised. In a pleasant glow he witnessed the departure of the local and waved his hand cheerfully in response to a similar gesture from the window of the smoker.

Returning, he paused before the doorway of the blacksmith shop, shifting his weight from one foot to the other, while Dan Storey, snickering and showing the gold tooth, made merry over the innocence of people who believed everything they heard, including autobiographical remarks on the part of horse carvers. The loungers in the shop guffawed gleefully at each recurrence of the words, and even the blacksmith looked up from the hoof between his aproned knees to grin at the phrase; but Mr. Porson heard it all with sober dignity.

"Don't see no reason to think he was lyin' about it," he said mildly. "Seen a sight of wooden horses, I have. Somebody must've carved 'em, I guess."

"Dog-goned if he don't believe it even now!" Storey laughed joyously.

Mr. Porson wagged his head. "Don't see nothin' so all-fired smart about not believin' things," he said. "Sounded real reas'nable—all this feller had to say about the business."

He submitted acquiescently to Storey's ridicule until the big silver watch informed him that it was time for him to go back to the boarding house for the dinner pail constaining his two nocturnal meals. He swung this almost gayly as he approached the rear door of the bank. Everything considered, the afternoon had been unusually successful.

"Don't know when I've heard more talk," he told himself aloud as he turned his key in the time clock.

II

Mr. Porson had risen rather earlier than was his habit. As he sauntered hopefully down Main Street the steeple clock clanged thrice, and he stopped to verify the accuracy of the silver watch. Proceeding, his eye hopefully alert for persons conversationally disposed, he came to a sudden delighted halt before the bank. Emerging from its door with a leather satchel was, unmistakably, the horse carver. Mr. Porson greeted him almost affectionately; but the other, regarding him without visible pleasure, evaded his extended hand and crossed the sidewalk briskly to a car that stood, shaken by the vibration of its idling engine, beside the curb.

Mr. Porson's disappointed eye found something dimly familiar about the large man who was in the act of climbing to the car. He approached the car, still hopeful, but as the horse carver set foot on its running-board it jerked forward; leaving Mr. Porson standing, open-mouthed and depressed, on the curb, it scudded away. He stared after it till it

swerved abruptly about the bend of the road. His memory now identified the large man; he had been shaved by Les McVitty on the occasion of the earlier visit of the horse carver.

The circumstance seemed worthy of narration, to Mr. Porson. He stopped in the doorway of the barber shop and informed the unresponsive Mr. McVitty of it:

"Them two fellers was just here—the one 't carves horses and the fat one 't was gettin' shaved. Seen 'm come out 'f the bank. Drivin' a flivver, this time, they was."

Mr. McVitty was sourly uninterested; but Dan Storey, lounging in the chair beside the window, exhibited his golden tooth. "Tell you any more about the horse-carvin' business?" he snickered.

Mr. Porson shook his head regretfully. "Seemed 's though they was in a hurry this time. Drove off kind of fast. Didn't have no talk with neither of 'em."

"Too bad," said Storey. "Kind of hoped you'd find out what the other feller does f'r a livin'. Might be a bull milker, 'r somethin' like that."

Even Les McVitty permitted a niggardly chuckle to escape him. Mr. Porson, heartened by this sign of relenting, was on the point of entering the shop, when a sudden outcry from the other side of the street diverted him from this purpose. Eben Whipple, standing on the steps of the bank, was waving his arms and shouting. Mr. Porson ran toward him.

"Something's wrong in the bank," said Whipple. "The door ain't locked, but there isn't a soul inside."

Over his shoulder Mr. Porson's bewildered stare confirmed the statement. He brushed past Whipple

and gazed blankly at the teller's empty cage, the untenanted stools of the two clerks, the vacant chair of Mr. Tanner, overturned behind the august mahogany desk.

"What's come of all of 'em?" he demanded. "It ain't hardly closin' time, and they'd all ought to be right here."

A distant muffled sound of thudding answered him; there were vague shouting noises. He tilted his head to listen. The sounds guided him to the rear of the building. They came from behind the door of the closet where Mr. Porson kept his broom and mop. He tried the handle. The door shook under a redoubled pounding on its inner side and a voice, unmistakably that of Mr. Tanner, adjured him passionately to unlock it.

"Key's gone," shouted Mr. Porson. He stood back, considering ways and means. "Wait a minute. I got a notion." With his jackknife he tapped at the pins of the hinges. The door fell outward, and, led by Mr. Tanner, the teller and the two clerks surged out over it.

"What'd you-all go in there f'r?" demanded Mr. Porson. "How'd you——" They jostled past him in a united rush for the outer door. He stared after them. "You-all crazy? What——"

"Robbed, you fool" Mr. Tanner's presidential dignity had evaporated; his whiskers quivered with the intensity of his outraged wrath. "Did you see which way they went? Two of them—one fat and the other——"

"Short, dark-complected feller with a mole on his cheek?" Dan Storey had joined the group that crowded into the lobby, and his voice was shrill with excitement.

"That's it. Which way did they go?" Tanner jumped at him. "Speak up, man! They've got all the cash we had on hand!"

"It's them!" Storey exploded in a high-pitched laugh. "Ask Porson! He knows the dark-complected one real well. He——"

"If it was them 't done it," said Mr. Porson, challenged by the imposing glare of Mr. Tanner, "they went north, drivin' a flivver. But——"

"Get the sheriff on the wire," snapped Tanner. "If they're on the highway in a flivver, there's a chance of catching up with them yet. Telephone up to the police at Darmstadt, Jim."

"Look here, Mr. Tanner"—Mr. Porson moved forward eagerly—"if you want to catch them fellers you can do it easy. Listen here! The smallest one's in the horse-carvin' business over to——"

Tanner paused. "How do you know so much about him?" he demanded. Under his suddenly terrible eye, Mr. Porson's tongue failed him.

Dan Storey pressed forward. "That's how they worked it, Mr. Tanner. Spent a whole afternoon pumpin' Al Porson about the bank. Heard 'em over to the hotel. Even had him drawin' pitchers of the lay-out on a newspaper. Seen him myself."

Under Tanner's awful eye Mr. Porson's uneasy silence was confession. "In with 'em, were you? That's how they knew their way around, eh? Grab him, boys! We'll——"

Dan Storey intervened. "Shucks, Mr. Tanner, Al wasn't in cahoots with 'em. They just got him talkin'—kidded him along, the way everybody does, till he told 'em what they aimed to find out."

"He said he was in the horse-carvin' business," Mr. Porson declared doggedly. "Said he——"

"So you told him all he needed to know, did you?" Tanner abolished him with a gesture. "Get out of this and stay out. Got the sheriff, Jim?"

"On the way over. Trying to get Darmstadt now."

Mr. Porson was brushed aside in the fevered scurry that ensued. Nobody would listen to him. His endeavor to regain the ear of Mr. Tanner resulted only in a more explicit statement of his altered relation to the bank.

"You mean I'm fired?" he asked.

"You're lucky to be out of jail," Tanner informed him. "You'd be there right now if I thought you had the sense to know what you were doing. Told that yegg just when the mill pay roll would be here, I suppose. Told him just where there was a place to lock us all up while he made his get-away! Cost us twelve thousand dollars, that's all. Oh, yes, you're fired, Porson!"

"You c'n get him easy," insisted Mr. Porson. "All you got to do is look f'r somebody in the horse-carvin' business. Stands to reason they can't be many of 'em left. All you got to do——"

"Mean to tell me you haven't got it through your head even yet that he was making a fool of you? A horse carver! And you believe it!"

"He said so himself," said Mr. Porson stubbornly. "All you got to do——"

Retreating before the menace of Tanner's exasperated gesture, he endeavored without success to gain a hearing from Sheriff Calvin Tupper, whose huge pulpy bulk occupied the entire back seat of the car which, even as Mr. Porson began to explain, moved in pursuit of the thieves. He had better luck with the bystanders gathered in front of the bank door, now closed and barred against the curious.

These gave willing ear to Mr. Porson's views, even encouraging him to repeat them; but it was altogether apparent even to Mr. Porson's observation that he was providing entertainment rather than information. He withdrew presently, pursued by snickers.

He was engaged in earnest conversation with himself when he came abreast of the white house where old Tom Linkletter, retired from his shoe business, spent his declining days in the dappling shadow of his venerable apple tree. Mr. Porson hesitated thoughtfully at the gate. Squaring his shoulders with sudden resolution, he swung it back and strode up the walk. Mr. Linkletter regarded him with the bleached eye of tremulous age. His lower jaw quivered and his face, pink and artless with the innocence of second childhood, assumed a vaguely apprehensive look.

"Ain't feeling fit to talk, Al," he quavered. "Seems 's though I ain't got the stren'th f'r it, kind of."

Mr. Porson disregarded the implications of the remark. "Used to have a wooden horse when you was in the harness business, didn't you?"

Linkletter's bleached eye brightened feebly. "Yeh. Dapple gray, it was. Give good money f'r it, I did. Aimed to get me the best they was."

"'Member where you bought it?" Mr. Porson spoke more eagerly.

"I'd ought to, seein' what I give f'r it. Bought it off Conrad Hoffnagle, down to Binchester. Best hand to carve a horse I ever see, he was. Charged high f'r 'em, but they was wuth it—might think they was alive if you didn't get too close."

Mr. Porson produced the stub of a pencil and

made laborious note upon the back of a frayed envelope. Departing he moved with decent haste, the legitimate hurry of one no longer compelled to regard time as something merely to be endured. His head was up; he carried himself with dignity. At the bank, denied admission by the front door, he used his latchkey to unlock the rear entrance. Harshly forbidden by Mr. Tanner to linger, he wagged his head with dogged purpose.

"Got something better to do'n hang around here," he declared. "Jest stopped in to get my things."

From the cubby-hole under the basement stairs he brought forth certain items of equipment purchased in the early period of his night watchmanship, while he still lay under the illusion that adventure and romance were implicit in that profession. Distrustful of his accuracy with a revolver, he had acquired instead a double-barreled shotgun, sawed off to half its normal length. He had prevailed, too, on Calvin Tupper to swear him in as deputy, and the nicked badge pertaining to this office was still pinned under the lapel of the old coat he wore when on duty. He possessed, also, a pair of handcuffs, venerable and rusty, but serviceable notwithstanding.

Tanner's irate eye widened at the sight of these articles.

"What you going to do with all that?" he demanded.

Mr. Porson surveyed him calmly. "Aim to go get back that there money," he said. "And the man 't stole it too."

The confidence with which he spoke manifestly impressed Tanner. "What makes you think you can do it? Know anything you haven't told us?"

"Been tryin' to tell you ever since the rob'ry hap-

pened," said Mr. Porson. "Wouldn't a soul listen to me. All you got to do is go hunt f'r somebody in the horsecarv——"

"All right—all right!" said Tanner hurriedly. "You go and do it."

"Aim to," said Mr. Porson. He wrapped a newspaper securely about the sawed-off gun, bestowed the handcuffs in the pocket of his coat and affixed the badge to his suspender strap.

Contemplating these operations Tanner was moved to sour amusement. "There's a thousand dollars reward, you know, if you catch those fellows."

Mr. Porson looked up from the process of surrounding the shotgun with another layer of newspaper. "I c'n use it," he said. Again his conviction seemed to impress the banker.

"You really think he was telling you the truth when he——"

"All through tryin' to say what I think," said Mr. Porson. "Don't see no good reason f'r tryin' to leave somebody else c'lect that there reward money."

He made a dignified exit. On the way to the station he turned a deaf ear to sundry pleasantries having to do with horse carvers. He bought a ticket to Binchester and, from the window of the smoking car, wagged his head at the retreating environs of the village.

III

The thick-set, short-necked man behind the desk at police headquarters in Binchester paid a mollifying respect to Mr. Porson's badge of office. He had been apprised by telegraph of the robbery and was immediately and soberly interested in the sug-

gestion that at least one of the perpetrators resided in Binchester.

"Hoffnagle, eh?" A gangling clerk responded to his ring and returned with a city directory. A blunt forefinger ran down the page, halted. "Uh-huh. Here we are. Conrad Hoffnagle, wood carver; 22½ Mohawk. Hey, Riordan!"

Another bull-necked gentleman in citizen attire entered in answer to the hail.

"This is a deputy sheriff from Unionville on that bank job. He's got a tip that it was pulled off by a bird named Hoffnagle, from here. Chase up to this address with him and see what's in it."

Mr. Porson rose. He shook hands with the lieutenant and followed Riordan nimbly to the street. Here a small car with a police-department tag above its license plate awaited them. Riordan drove it speedily through the traffic of the waning afternoon. It paused presently at the mouth of a narrow alley between dingy brick houses. Descending Riordan discreetly transferred a flat gun to the side pocket of his coat and permitted his right hand to remain there with it.

"Over the wiaduct, down by the winegar woiks," he quoted. "Watch your step, brother. They boil 'em hard around here."

Mr. Porson clutched his newspaper parcel firmly in both hands; his eyes were bright. "Guess they'll laugh out the wrong side of their mouths back home," he said. "Think they're so smart never to believe nothin'. Le's go in. They's a thousand dollars' ree-ward."

Riordan permitted him to lead the way along the alley. Behind the abutting houses, it ended at the door of a weather-beaten wooden building, across

the front of which, in faded white paint, stretched a legend to the effect that here C. Hoffnagle engaged in the allied pursuits of carving and turning wood. It was Mr. Porson's hand that opened the peeling door. Riordan entered a wide, raftered shop, littered and cobwebbed, partially screened by Mr. Porson's slighter figure. At the farther end, in the light of a grimy window, a wizened man in a bed-ticking apron surveyed them above steel-rimmed glasses, interrupting his task of painting the distended nostril of a rocking-horse with spirited vermilion.

Riordan pushed forward now, exhibiting the badge pinned to his vest.

"We're from headquarters, see? We're looking for a bird named Hoffnagle."

"That's me." The shriveled ancient spoke with a guttural thickness. "What could I do for you? Rogging-hosses—I guess, not?" He imparted to the word a flavor of resigned contempt.

Riordan turned to Mr. Porson. "This the bird you're after?"

Mr. Porson shook his head. The plain-clothes man swung about menacingly on the wood carver. "Never mind trying to stall. Come through. We want Hoffnagle, see, and we're here to get him."

"Dot's me." The man's speech thickened slightly. "You could ask anybody. Forty-five years I am in business here."

His tone carried conviction even to Riordan's professional skepticism. "Well, you got a son, haven't you? Or a grandson maybe. Come on, don't stall now."

"Nobody," said Hoffnagle. "I ain'd married. I live upstairs. You could ask anybody. Forty-five years I am living here."

Riordan swung about to Mr. Porson. "Well, how about it? It's your job. If you ask me, I think the old bird's on the level. What's next?"

"It ain't him," said Mr. Porson. "Don't understand it, I don't. The feller said himself he was in the horse-carvin' business, and Tom Linkletter says it was a man named Hoffnagle 't carved the horse he used to have in the harness store."

"Linkletter?" The old man nodded eagerly. "Sure! I garf him a horse in eighdeen hunnert eighdy-sigs. Linkletter, by Unionville? Sure!"

"Le's get it straight." Riordan faced Mr. Porson. "Who tipped you off to this?"

"Why, the feller himself," Mr. Porson explained patiently. "He was over home a couple weeks back, him and another man, and we got to talkin', kind of, and this feller let on 't he was into the horse-carvin' business. Claimed it was him 't made Tom Linkletter's horse."

He submitted to a brisk fire of cross-question, Riordan's voice and manner steadily lessening in patience. "And you fell for it! A slick yegg hands you a line of hooley that wouldn't kid a baby, and you chase all the way over here on the strength of it! Holy Mike!"

Stubbornness came into Mr. Porson's face. "He said so himself," he persisted. "He said——"

"Murder!" Riordan lifted his hands. "You believe it yet!" Gimme air—gimme air!"

He swaggered heavily to the door. Mr. Porson made a last effort to detain him. "Wait! They's a thousand dollars ree——"

"Keep it," said Riordan with feeling. The door slammed after him.

Mr. Porson turned to Hoffnagle. "Never could

see nothin' so all-fired smart about not believin' nothin'," he said. "The feller didn't have no reason to lie to me, did he?" He meditated. "Didn't come right out and say his name was Hoffnagle, though, come to think of it. Might be somebody else in the horse-carvin' business."

Hoffnagle wagged his head. "No one is in the business no more," he declared. "Almost there ain'd no sudge business. Even by merrick-rounds iss only gamels and owstriches to rite on."

Mr. Porson started. "Why, that jest what the feller said! Them same words!" He twitched Hoffnagle's short sleeve. "Stands to reason he's into the business, 'r how would he know all that about merry-go-rounds and ostriches and all? Say, Mr. Hoffnagle, maybe he's worked for you, even—kind of short, dark-complected feller with a mole on his cheek."

"Hah!" Mr. Hoffnagle snorted strongly. "Him a horse garfer! Owstriches even dot loafer couldn't garfe! Boodlekkingk is all he would be good for, dot Larry Finn!"

He shook a knotted fist at the window. Beyond it Mr. Porson's brightening eye beheld the rear of a brick building whose curtained windows looked out over rickety iron fire escapes.

"Say the name's Finn?" He spoke softly. "Live over yonder, does he?"

Enlightened he took leave presently of Mr. Hoffnagle. Around the corner, in a frowzy ground-floor room, half office, half bar, he made inquiry of a man whose hard gaze dwelt on him without challenge.

"Larry Finn?" Amusement kindled behind the opaque inspection. "Uh-huh. Upstairs, sucker. Second floor back."

Mr. Porson mounted a dark stairway without haste. Almost timidly he tapped at the door. It opened warily, a niggardly crack, revealing no more than an eye beyond it. Confidently, however, Mr. Porson stepped forward. He found himself in the presence of Finn and the plump man who had accompanied him to Unionville.

"How d' do?" said Mr. Porson cheerfully. "I had quite a time findin' you."

Mr. Finn's countenance relaxed; his right hand removed itself from his coat pocket. "What's the big idea?" he demanded almost genially.

Mr. Porson fumbled with the newspaper wrappings of his parcel. "I come after the money," he announced. The paper slipped to the floor; the twin barrels of the sawed-off gun pointed at the lowermost button of Mr. Finn's vest. "Might kind of back up," suggested Mr. Porson apologetically. "Might hold up your hands, too—I guess you better. Scatters real pretty, buckshot does, and they's two barrels of it in this here gun."

The muzzle moved, as he spoke, in a short arc, so that it inspired the plump man as well as Mr. Finn to discreet compliance. At Mr. Porson's mild insistence they turned their backs to him and stood against the wall. He considered briefly. "Guess I'll have to ast you to step inside that there clozepress," he announced. "Won't keep you there no longer'n I c'n help."

He swung the closet door shut behind them with his toe and sighed as he twisted its key. He sighed again, more happily, as he opened the leather satchel which lay on the untidy bedspread.

IV

Mr. Tanner made some little ceremony of signing and blotting the check; he held it in the lifted hand with which he performed, in the direction of Mr. Alfred Porson, a gesture of admonition. "You've had a lucky windfall, Porson," he intoned. "I want you to get the benefit of it. I want you to deposit this money and let me invest it for you."

Mr. Porson spoke apologetically. "Aimed to use it, kind of——" he began.

Mr. Tanner dismissed the objection. "You won't need to spend a cent of it," he declared. "You've got your job back, and we're raising your pay. You——"

Firmly Mr. Porson moved his head in dissent. "I'm much obliged, Mr. Tanner," he said, "but it kind of seems 's though I wasn't never cut out f'r night-watchin' business, some way. Ain't only been waitin' f'r a good chance to get out'n it."

He inhaled profoundly. "Made a dicker with Les McVitty to take and learn me barberin'. Calculate to buy out his shop with this here money."

Again, as he withdrew, he breathed deep, and his tongue, moistening his lips, seemed to foretaste upon them the goodly savor of many words.

QUESTIONS

1. What are the first evidences of Al Porson's unpopularity?
2. What is the reason for this unpopularity?
3. Who are the people in the barber shop when Porson enters?
4. Explain how each one of them affected the conversation which followed.
5. What prompted the stranger to discuss the profession of horse-carving?

6. What were the effects of his conversation upon each of the men present?
7. What aroused the stranger's sudden interest in Porson?
8. What bearing on the plot has the scene at the hotel?
9. Show that Porson's character and actions are not inconsistent.
10. Explain how the stranger used the information gained from Porson to rob the bank.
11. Explain the steps by which Porson effected the capture.
12. Why did he succeed where others failed? What does this prove regarding a too sceptical attitude?
13. How does the final paragraph add to the appropriateness of the title?
14. Do you agree with Mr. Kahler that the action is not very convincing? Explain.
15. What are your feelings toward Al Porson?
16. Do you like this story? Why?
17. Write the next chapter in the life of Al Porson.
18. Most neighborhoods have some unusual character. Write a character sketch of such a person with whom you are familiar.

ANNIE LAURIE

BY

ZONA GALE

ZONA GALE

(1874-)

The name of Zona Gale stands high among present day writers in this country. The numerous excellent contributions which she has made to the field of contemporary literature make her inclusion inevitable in any record of leading American novelists. She is the author of some delightful verses and a successful dramatist as well.

Miss Gale was born in Portage, Wisconsin, in 1874. Her first story she printed herself, in pencil, before she had learned to write. Many stories followed, and even one or two novels; but it was not until she was sixteen years old and had entered the University that she succeeded in selling a story—one three thousand words long, for which she received three dollars.

Miss Gale was graduated from the University of Wisconsin with the degree of B.L. For the next six years she spent her time in newspaper work in Milwaukee, and in newspaper and magazine work in New York. During this time an M.L. degree was given her by Wisconsin University for work done in her absence. Her first New York position was with the *World*, where she succeeded with difficulty in obtaining a place on the staff.

In 1911, Zona Gale won a first prize of two thousand dollars offered by *The Delineator*, with her short story, "The Ancient Dawn." In 1921, "Miss Lulu Bett," a play produced in New York, received the Pulitzer Prize; and "Mister Pitt," the dramatization of her novel, "Birth," was awarded a two thousand dollar prize in 1924.

For the past few years Miss Gale has resided with her parents in Portage, Wisconsin, the town of her birth. In June, 1928, she married Mr. Edward Breece, also of Portage.

The most important works of Zona Gale are on the whole subtle and of a depth beyond the average high school student; but "Annie Laurie" is a tale of universal appeal, and should serve to implant the name of this writer in the minds of young readers.

Other short stories by Zona Gale are:

Soft Answers

Bill's Little Girl

Heart of Youth

Madrona

Way of Escape

Whipporwill

Evening

Bella

ANNIE LAURIE

She left the train at something called Morrel's Landing. She looked about on all that there was of it, left her traveling-bag and her violin case with the curious ticket man, whose only conversation was "Yep"; and said to the decrepit taxi's robust driver: "Mr. Martin Lowe—do you know him?"

The taxi driver shouted in a great voice, "Mart Lowe? Two dollars, though—it's quite a smart piece out."

She looked as if she had the fare, which may have been why he demanded it. Not that in all probability he knew chinchilla, or was intuitive as to the admirable line of the hat or the bag. But there was about Miss Lina Bothwell unquestionably a something, or so his demand and his deference seemed to say. And by the frown on his face and by his far look he may have been wondering: "Now what would she know about Mart Lowe or his missus?"

What, she might have retorted, should she know about Morrel's Landing at all—that assemblage of blistered and blighted buildings? It was a town, she observed, which did not even show outdated and ragged amusement posters—manifestly there had never been any amusement posters there. Windows of "stores" stared out blindly, save that here and there were affixed handbills calling to the Old Fiddlers' Contest to be held in "Post-Office Hall" that same night.

"I have arrived," Lina thought, "at the height of the season." As the Old Fiddlers' advertisements persisted, fluttering from every telegraph-pole, she thought: "I wish I'd let Mr. Jaquith come there too,

when he suggested coming—we'd have gone to hear the old fiddlers. . . ."

The road ran out through rough March ruts, thickly covered by snow which had arrived with winter fury, and was clearly thinking of beginning again. Dead trees, dead farmhouses, dead corn husks and stacks—all the sodden sleep of the country in early March. Three miles out, and at the end of a mile of criminal cross-road, the taxi floundered into the most moribund farmyard of all.

"Not here!" said Miss Lina Bothwell, with determination.

"Here," said the taxi man. "Two dollars, Ma'am."

She made him ask, at the unpainted door. Confirmed by the brown man and the thin blue woman who appeared on the threshold as if by one control, the chauffeur took his fee and shattered the dead quiet of the place as he rattled away. The two in the doorway stood staring at Miss Lina Bothwell, her chinchilla, and her admirable hat and bag.

She stepped up to them, none of her misgivings in her face, but instead a gentleness and a hesitancy, but whether of life or of art there was nobody there to determine. She said:

"Mr. Lowe, I am Lina Bothwell—Marian's daughter. I promised her to find you. May I come in?"

The blue woman said, "Good land," but the man, his attention suddenly ingathered and something gigantic coming into his look, said: "Her girl? Little Marian's girl? Lord Almighty." He added: "We were expecting her, but not—you"—a flattery unintended and direct.

She followed them into the kitchen. The kitchen

was bright with paint and firelight and blooming plants.

"Throw off your things," the woman said as if by appointment, and then, still as if in the clutch of some routine which no exigency had ever disturbed, turned to the cupboard and took down a teapot and canister. "Stir up the fire, Mart," she said.

And he, though his face still said "Lord Almighty," stooped and stirred and replenished the fire, as if routine were the life of life.

Lina sat down before the hearth. Twilight was coming, and the red glow from the draft of the range was on her brown hair and her smooth face. The black gown was a miracle not lost on the woman, nor were the buckled shoes and the enameled watch. But Martin Lowe seemed to discern nothing save the core of some incredible moment. He faced about from the fire and stared down at her.

"I hadn't seen Marian in thirty years," he said.

If she noticed that first person singular, Lina gave no sign. Mrs. Martin Lowe went on brewing tea.

Martin Lowe almost whispered. "You wrote to me—three months ago. It's all I know—tell me about her."

She averted her eyes and held her voice steady and said: "It was quite sudden. No illness—no warning. She had time to say only one thing—she said, 'Find Mart . . .' and then she looked at me, and she went. But the look I knew—she had often talked with me about you."

Mrs. Lowe spoke out sharply. "I trust," she said, "she lived to regret leaving her home and her folks."

"Leaving Mr. Lowe, yes," said Lina quickly. "But she never regretted leaving the farm and Morrel's Landing. Oh, no—she was glad that she left.

Why, her life—you can't imagine how full it was!" She spoke with eager pride. "Travel—audiences—praise—friends—oh, she had everything. How could she regret? But she never forgot."

Martin Lowe clasped his hands loosely between his knees and sat looking down at them.

"I remember the day when my father brought her home," he said. "I was man-grown. She was twelve—pretty as a flower. He told us she was to be our sister—and none of us knew anything more than that, except that she wasn't our sister. She"—he drew his breath sharply, and added only—"she lived with us until she was twenty. Then she went with Valentine." His eyes burned on Lina's eyes. "Was—was he good to her?" he demanded tensely.

"No," said Lina, flushing, "he was not. She left my father when I was three—then came all her success with her singing. She said—she's told me how you used to help her—and to play on your violin for her to sing."

Martin Lowe got to his feet and began walking up and down the kitchen, up and down the kitchen. "Yes," he said, "I used to play for her to sing."

"Tea!" said Mrs. Lowe, less like an invitation than an explosion. She pushed her husband toward a chair at the table, but he did not see her. While she and Lina sat down, he kept on with his caged walk about the room.

"Here, in this very room," he said, "winter evenings, summer evenings. I would stand there—she would stand there by the cupboard. The others would sit here—and she'd sing like an angel of God."

"Here's your cup with two lumps in it," said his wife; "best not let it get cold."

Lina stared about the kitchen. This, then, was the very house from which her mother had escaped, had made her way out with that young choir-leader and gone to the city, to life, to music, and to death.

"Have you a picture of her—then?" Lina cried.

With a manner of running from the room, Martin Lowe disappeared beyond an inner door. A breath of cold air came from there, like the air of a yesterday.

Suddenly Mrs. Lowe leaned toward her guest. This woman's face was hard and pointed and terribly alert. She said in a tone of unexpected depth and richness:

"He was always in love with her, you know. I expect you did know. She was no blood relation to any of them. Mart, he idolized her. . . . The whole prairie knew that. And your ma was just as crazy about him only—she wanted to get away more'n she wanted him."

Lina stared at her. So that was it! That was why she had been told about "Mart" from the time that she could remember her mother, that mother who, then, had had everything excepting the one thing. . . .

He came back with the picture in his hands, and suddenly Lina saw how handsome he had been, the great frame, the deep eyes, the flickering brows, the heavy hair. He was a man of sixty. "Man-grown" when her mother had come there, he had watched her slow ripening to womanhood, had loved her and lost her and had never forgotten, as she had not forgotten.

"Here," he said.

Something vast in Lina opened and closed as she looked on the picture of her mother at twenty—a

picture that she had never seen—and whose untroubled beauty was like a wound. Lina lifted her eyes and saw that as the photograph had pierced her, so it was piercing him. She took the picture, held it in her hands, and as she could not speak of it, she said:

“The violin—do you play that now?”

At once he began that caged walking up and down again. “No,” he said. “No. No.” He said no more, and suddenly his wife laughed.

“He did,” she said; “he played evenings till it almost drove me crazy—mournful pieces, nothing else.”

She seemed to stop short of telling something more, and Lina said:

“That’s what I do—play the violin, as best I can. I’m with some people who are playing tomorrow in Chicago—I left them to come here.”

He looked at her sharply. “There’s a symphony concert in Chicago tomorrow night,” he said. I read the advertisement. Jaquith plays.”

She nodded. “I’ve a little place in the orchestra.”

“My Lord,” said Martin Lowe, “then you’ve heard him—Milo Jaquith.”

“Yes,” she said, and said no more. But something like color or flowing line had come into her voice and into her face.

Martin Lowe spoke as a man speaks of a god: “I read every word I can find about him. Once I thought I’d hear him before I die. But I guess not—I guess not.”

She said, “He’s wonderful beyond words”—that light and that color still in her voice, and then cried quickly: “But you! Aren’t you playing down in Morrel’s Landing tonight? The whole town was

covered with posters about the Fiddlers' Contest."

He dropped his eyes. "No," he said only. "No."

His wife laughed. "He means that for me," she said harshly. "I gave away his fiddle. I expect I done wrong. But I couldn't stand his mournful tunes every night, and us alone here—never a soul. He hasn't any fiddle now."

Abruptly Lina understood her. Here on this desolate farm, away from living voices and events. . . . She looked out at the yard deep and still in the snow, beginning to fall again. Her thought could understand the woman, but with her heart she understood Martin Lowe. And how gallant he was!

He lifted his eyes, and smiled, saying cheerfully: "If it hadn't been for that, I expect I'd been down there, tuning up with the worst of them."

Out of an unwilling pride his wife spoke. "He took a prize last year," she said.

As if to silence her, he began speaking his thoughts, his eyes again on those loosely clasped hands.

"I guess she was right—I did play a lot of wailing music. I always liked that kind most as much as the dance ones. I didn't blame her. But I took a lot of comfort——" He looked over in the corner by the cupboard, as if he could still see someone standing there, for whom he played. "We used to plan," he said, "your—your ma and I. . . . We were going to play for the whole world. Well, she did, I guess. And I've never been out of the State. Never across the state-line." He laughed a little. "I thought I might go down to hear them tonight," he said, "but the mare went lame yesterday." He sighed, with the terrible patience of those who have had nothing.

Lina stood up quickly. "I haven't told you what I came for," she said. "I will in a minute—but first: I left my violin down at the station. Let's go down and get it, and you play in the contest to-night."

He looked up, without entertaining the dream for an instant. "I'd like mighty well to tuck a fiddle under my chin again," he said.

"We'll go down," said Lina, but he looked at her incredulously.

"The mare is lame," he said gently. "And we haven't got a telephone—and no neighbor that I'd ask to take anything out such a night."

Lina laughed. "Haven't you ever walked four miles?"

"Me! But you couldn't get down there."

"Try me!" she cried. "I do miles and miles. Couldn't we all walk down to the village, and go to the concert—and I'll catch my train at midnight instead of early in the morning. You'll go, Mrs. Lowe?"

"Me?" said Mrs. Lowe. "I wouldn't cross the road to hear all the fiddles in the country. I'd cross the road and go the other way—excuse me. He can go," she added magnanimously.

"Let's be starting, then," cried Lina.

Still he looked at her unbelievably. "You wouldn't want me to use your fiddle," he said.

"I'd love to have you use my fiddle," said Lina.

Mrs. Lowe said shrilly: "But you can't go without your suppers!" And when Lina smiled that aside, she cried: "Mart! You must eat something."

And in her tone, Lina thought, leaped all that solicitude for his stomach that she had denied him for his soul. The woman's anxiety touched the girl, and

she spoke to her gently—a good creature, who brought some great fleece-lined rubber boots, the pride of her heart, and herself put them over the small buckled shoes.

Mrs. Lowe said, "It's a good thing you wrote you was coming—so he's got on his best suit"—and herself brought his sheepskin coat. He was still saying hesitating, uncertain words as they stepped outside.

As they met the thick harsh rush of the cold Lina's spirit rose to breast it, and she cried: "This is going to be wonderful! Oh I *hope* Mother knows."

He opened the gate for her and shut it sharply on his words: "No more than she's ever known anything about me these thirty years—you can be sure of that." Startled by the bitterness in his voice, she looked up at him. "I don't believe in death and life mixing," he explained grimly.

And because of the mask that had settled over his face, she tried to bring back its feeling, and said: "Tell me about my mother leaving this farm—didn't she say good-by to you?"

The kindness and the sadness came back upon his face like visible light. He said: "I know now that she did—but I didn't know it then. She came to me by that gate, where I was tying up a rose-bush, and she kissed me—anybody passing might have seen her. She said: 'Mart, don't ever think I don't love you!' I guess she'd want me to tell you that. It was that night she went with him. But first we had the evening—playing and singing. She made me play for her—she sung 'Annie Laurie' like an angel of God—I can hear her voice whenever I try. Isn't it wonderful how you can hear the voices of folks

that have died—tones and drops and little lifts? I can hear her now. . . .”

“Yes,” Lina said, and thought, “mixing death and life!”

He went on as if she were not there: “And most always I hear her voice in ‘Annie Laurie.’ It kind of seems like her song—your ma’s and mine. When bedtime came that night, and I was putting away my fiddle, she wispered to me: ‘If I die, I’ll come and sing for you to play. And if you die, you come and play for me.’ I didn’t laugh at her—I thought too much of her.” He stopped, and said shortly, “I guess you know how much I thought of her,” and when Lina assented he seemed pleased.

“It was that night she went with him,” he ended. “In the morning she was gone without any word. I never saw her any more. I didn’t blame her. She wanted to get out and try her wings. She was brave and she went. I was a fool and I stayed.” He waved his arm, a gaunt circular motion, at the sweep of the farms and the hills. “She let her music get out of this,” he said, “and she gave it to folks. I kept mine in me and it turned to acid.”

Lina cried gaily: “But you’re going to let it out tonight, remember. I’ll wager you’ll be the best fiddler there!”

He corrected with bitterness. “Old fiddler,” he said, “old fiddler,” and added harshly: “Don’t you expect anything of me tonight. My wrist and my fingers are too stiff—I ain’t played in two months—not since she gave away my fiddle—except as I’ve pretended I was playing something.” He took her arm to guide her over the frozen furrows of the road. “I’ve walked with your—your ma a thousand times here,” he said. “Seems like you ought to be her.”

She said softly: "Perhaps I am—a little. She never seems very far, somehow." He said nothing.

Now they gave themselves silently to meeting the wind and snow. When they reached the main road the darkness had come down and the cold, which augured clearing clouds, was increasing; but if it occurred to Lina that now they might find a telephone at one or another of these isolated houses, and summon that hardy taxi driver, this seemed not to enter the thought of her companion, deep in his pioneer psychology of thrift. But so far she was enjoying her adventure, and now she raised her voice above the wind and said:

"I haven't told you what I came to see you about—besides just seeing you, you know, for Mother."

"Wasn't that enough?" he said. "I'm going to live on this—seeing you, that belong to her. You look like her, some," he added. "I think it's your forehead. . . ."

It seemed a pity to break that with her news; but if she got her train at midnight, she wouldn't perhaps see him again alone. But the wind was cutting and buffeting them, and this seemed no moment for her news to be given. She glanced up at the dogged figure, facing the storm as he had faced his life, and she thought of the old dreams of this man—of love, of music—coming back to his bleak world, lifting their heads, mounting into his darkness. How much he must have longed to get away. As she looked at him, she could almost see above his head the long arc of his strong desire for flight.

She thought: "Mr. Jaquith should see him," and wished again: "If I had dared to let him drive down here when he wanted to——" and even wished faintly that he were a man and not quite a god.

The two kept on, still in silence, Lina now calculating the time. So impassably bad was the going that they had been able to make but slow progress. And now the cold was so intense she began to be afraid she would have to stop for warmth at a farmhouse. Two cars had overtaken them without offering to halt.

"Cold?" Martin Lowe shouted abruptly, and at the absurdity of the question she shot back, "Warm as toast," and plodded on.

It was at the end of another quarter-mile that she saw the yellow flood of light from a far car come streaming down a side road.

"I think they ought to pick us up," she shouted to the amazed Martin, and darted through the snow. She need not have hurried. A rod from the main road the car snorted, spluttered, and stopped dead. Lina kept on, plowed through a great drift, and came breathlessly to that car as a man alighted from the driver's seat and the light flashed on within the car and the rear door came open. Then she laughed out gaily, breathlessly, and cried:

"Please, kind Sir—give us a ride?"

"Miss Bothwell!" the man cried. "My word. Good heavens. Thank God."

"Say some more of them for me," said Lina.

"I've been looking for you since noon," this man shouted. "I was a fool to let you go off alone. I started out in the car right behind your train——"

"Instead of resting for Chicago!" she cried. "I've probably given you pneumonia, and Mr. Lowe too—oh, Mr. Jaquith!" she said, "I don't want him to know who you are—would you mind?"

To this he said merely: "But what are you doing on the king's highway, this mad night?" But now

Martin Lowe had come up and with the chauffeur was stamping down the deep drift that had stalled the motor.

Lina cried, "Mr. Lowe—it's a friend of mine. It's Mr. Jack—and his big car. And we're invited to ride, aren't we, Mr. Jack?"

"You are not," said the big fur figure deeply. "You're commanded to ride, by Jove. And now what's it all about?" He brushed the snow from the chinchilla, and housed Lina under fur robes in the car, and when the three men had beaten down the snow, and the two came into the warmth, Martin Lowe said:

"I heard they had them heated and lighted under glass—but I never saw one."

Lina saw the molded and weathered face flushed and shining, and she plunged into her story to the man who hung on her words.

The lights of Morrel's Landing, such as they were, were winking bravely through the storm when the car plowed down the main street. Already it was eight o'clock, and as they passed the hall, up a flight of wooden outside stairs, they caught the sound of violins. And at the sound Martin Lowe's head came up, and he said, "I haven't heard one all winter. Not since haying, when they had a barn-dance. . . . Say, but I can't use your fiddle!" he cried to Lina. "Such a scraper as me!"

They had drawn up at the little wooden station to get the violin. But the building lay black and untenanted.

"Shut up tight till the ten-thirty comes through," said Martin Lowe. "I'd ought to have thought of that."

Watching Lina as she directed the driver to find

the agent, Mr. Jaquith suddenly said: "I say, don't bother. I've a violin."

She looked at him breathlessly. "Yours?" said Lina, to whom and to the thousands who heard him, his violin was a kind of ark.

Jaquith smiled at Martin Lowe. "Some men I'd let play on it and some men I wouldn't. This is one of the men who can take it. Drive to the building where you see two lighted windows instead of one," he told the chauffeur.

Martin Lowe looked at him with deep eyes. "Say," he said, "I guess the world's got more music in it than I've been thinking it had—everybody with a violin!"

It was Jaquith himself who laid the case in Martin Lowe's hands, who received it as if it had been a child.

The three went up the unsteady outside staircase and stepped into the hall. A room seating not a hundred was filled and lighted by gas which beat down on the little platform, where on wooden chairs were seated six old men. One had now taken his place before the others. His head was bent, his eyes were on the floor, his violin was in place. He waited until the confusion of the entrance had ceased, then waveringly and on a single string, his music began. This man was seventy, his hair scanty and white, his face thin and priestlike, his arms and legs angular and fragile, the hands on his poor instrument were knotted and veined. On that one string, waveringly, there crept about the room a melody which he knew and loved. Back of him sat the five other old men, their violins across their knees. None of them was less than sixty, some of them were far more and every one of them had been true

enough to the authentic voice to come here with pride and to do as much as he could.

Her chin buried in her coat, her face partly hidden, Lina thought: "This is going to kill me." She glanced at Jaquith and her heart blossomed like a flower. For in his face as in her feeling there was only the excluding sense of the deep spirit, one ray of which had once touched these old men and still held them captive. Somewhere, in far youth, or in unlived dreams, the love of music had moved them, claimed them. Somehow, from farm and store, they had kept that claim clean and alive. Here in this bleak little "hall" moved the wing of the god, stirring the ash of a divine fire—faint, far, crowded out, but never forsaken or forgotten.

And the people! When the old man ceased, they shouted and clapped their approval, had him back, as if for them too—above curiosity and boredom—flamed the same signal. And catching sight of Martin, they shouted: "Mart! Get up there with your fiddle, Mart!"

He had opened the case, had lifted the beautiful violin, had flashed an unspeakable look at the man who had lent it to him; and now Martin too went to the platform. To Jaquith, Lina murmured her utter gratitude and gave him in a word Martin's dour history.

But Jaquith said only: "You feel it so—good Lord, do you feel for the whole world? Does anyone feel the way you feel? Today I've been wretched away from you."

She looked at him and away—and the smoky room was a place of a thousand lights.

Once more a thin strand of tone floated out from a twisted figure on the wooden chair.

"If I could play them as they are," Jaquith whispered. "If I could play them. . . ."

And the next player was blind and was guided to his seat and played gaily and quite sweetly from his darkness. Then came an old man, whose wife took the piano and played with him, her anxious face turned toward him, eager for him to do his best.

Then it was Martin Lowe's turn, and when he stood up, so straight and grave, before his neighbors, Lina's eyes brimmed. For a moment he stood quiet—the man who had heard a voice and had failed to follow, but had never forgotten; and then he began to play. But the rich and sonorous tone of the instrument could not cover the triviality and the clumsiness of the thin little melody that he chose. His hands were stiff, he was in terrible embarrassment, Lina ached for him. The next piece was better—but still stiff, still inept. Then he seemed to recover something. He stood quiet, seemed to listen, turned toward Lina. And suddenly she rose, and Jaquith stood beside her, and Martin Lowe looked at them and then he began to play.

"Maxwelton braes are bonnie . . .

The violin all but spoke the words—an arrangement of his own, an arrangement, Lina divined, which he had made years before for the little girl who stood and sang by the cupboard.

Not from the hearts of those in the little room alone, but from some web of loved tone and word stretched round the world, the soul of the old song surged and flowed into the violin in this man's hands. Was it his hands alone, Lina wondered, or was it the invisible hands of the man whose great instrument he did not know that he held; and the hands of oth-

ers who had held it and of him who had fashioned it?

"Gie'd me her promise true . . ."

And was it the web of music alone—or of love itself poured down the years through the channel of that lyric, that more than any other song in the world spoke the hearts of men in their highest hour?

"And for bonnie Annie Laurie . . ."

The crest of the beauty wavered over the room. Martin's eyes were on hers. And in that moment it came to Lina that it was not the web of music alone, nor the web of its tenderness that spoke here—but the love of one man for one woman, and of one woman, and she dead, for this man. It was their old dream that went crying through the air.

In the utter quiet of the others, he ceased and sat down; then the rude applause burst out, sweeping the room. And over their clapping and cries, Jaquith's voice boomed out:

"Bravo! Bravo! Bravo!"

Suddenly Martin, who was seated, his look on the violin on his knees, lifted his eyes and met those of Jaquith. Martin sprang to his feet and spoke, his voice hoarse and passionate:

"Neighbors—I met a man and he lent me his fiddle. Just now I've seen the name on the plate. The name says Milo Jaquith—it's him! Right here in this hall—*it's him!*"

There were those in the little Morrel's Landing audience to whom the name meant nothing. But the old men who had played that night, they knew. They laid their violins on the floor and got to their

feet, clapping and calling; and the audience joined them, and over their clamor came the voice of Martin Lowe:

"Milo Jaquith, come up here and play for us, that never heard good music in our whole lives."

Milo Jaquith emerged from his great fur coat and went down the narrow aisle. When they saw him, the light figure, the beautiful face, the clamor ceased. For there was about him that which marked him as greater than they, greater than any whom they had ever seen. On the platform he grasped the hand of Martin Lowe, then, of all the old men standing there, their faces living at last. Then he made them sit down again, and he played.

A cave of darkness pierced by a ray of splendor—a desert sweet with a giant flower perfuming the miles—an empty heart opening to the life it had never known—all these were in the playing of Milo Jaquith in the little room. If there were those whose lives had not let them even know the great name, there was no one whose being was not kindled by the sovereign beauty of what he gave them.

One by one, when at last they let him cease, the seven old men rose and grasped his hand—Jaquith, in whom God had spoken, and they who had once heard God's voice in a sound far off, and could not forget. It was as if in that room all the beating love of music in all the hearts that have worshipped it and might not follow it, and all the wistful fingers grown stiffened with toil, that once might have drawn down harmony, and all the voices that sang but a few notes in their youth and then were silenced by life—as if all these came into the little hall and for one moment of time spoke in the faces of the people. Spoke clearest of all in the faces of the old

fiddlers who stood, bent and peering from misty eyes, when Lina and Jaquith and Martin left the hall.

Sitting in the car that was to take Martin Lowe to his home after the express should have left at midnight, they had his promise to drive to Chicago next day to hear the symphony. Martin was still breathless with his wonder.

"I never thought God cared this much about me," he said more than once. Then he turned to Lina. "I want you to know, and I guess you do know, that your ma was there in the hall tonight—singing with me her song, just like she used to sing it over by the cupboard."

Lina said only: "I know"; and Martin added to himself: "I guess music kind of mixes life and—them that we don't see any more."

When they had told him good-by, and the train had taken them to carry them to their junction, Lina began planning for Martin—and half of her thought was on Martin, but all of it was on the man at her side.

"I want to get him a violin when he comes down tomorrow," she said, "and tickets for him for all the music in Chicago this winter."

To which Jaquith answered: "You know what my following you around like this means."

"I haven't thanked you," she tried to say.

"It means," he went on, as simply as anybody in love, "that I'm going to follow you around all my life, if you'll let me."

She looked at him as Martin had looked from the platform. "You!" she said. "You—whom everybody adores—and I just play a violin in the last row of your orchestra——"

"You're not going to marry me to play to me," he told her. "I can play to myself."

"You wonderful thing," said Lina. "If I hadn't loved you before, I should love you for the way you were to Martin Lowe." Then she looked at Jaquith blankly. "Do you know," she cried, "I forgot to tell him what I went down there to tell him. That my mother's will left him fifty thousand in securities. . . ."

Milo Jaquith merely said: "But never mind what you didn't tell him. What else are you going to tell me?"

QUESTIONS

1. Who was Lina Bothwell's mother? In what manner did she win fame?
2. What was her relationship to Martin Lowe?
3. Describe the scene in Martin Lowe's kitchen.
4. Was Martin Lowe's life a happy one? Explain.
5. Did the fame Marion won compensate her for the loss of Martin Lowe?
6. Did Martin Lowe desire to take a part in the contest at Morrel's Landing? Explain.
7. Why did Lina wish Martin to be unaware of Mr. Jaquith's identity?
8. Why does Jaquith loan Martin his violin?
9. For what reason is Martin able to play "Annie Laurie" so well?
10. What is the effect when the identity of Mr. Jaquith becomes known?
11. Did Lina fulfil her duties at Morrel's Landing?
12. How will Lina answer Mr. Jaquith's final question?
13. Describe a place similar to Morrel's Landing with which you are familiar.
14. The setting adds what advantages to the story? The characters?
15. Find examples of unusual originality in the story.
16. Write a theme describing Martin Lowe's visit to Chicago.

CHRISTMAS EVE'S DAY

BY

BARRY BENEFIELD

BARRY BENEFIELD

(1883—)

"Christmas Eve's Day," by Barry Benefield, is similar to many other fine stories by this author in that its setting is one which he frequently employs. Mr. Benefield has good reason for writing about this section of the country, for he is well acquainted with it; it is the scene of his youth.

Concerning his biography, Mr. Benefield writes:

"I was born in the bayou and piney woods country of north-east Texas near the border of Louisiana, in a small town with a Democratic name—Jefferson. After the local public grade and high schools, I was graduated from the University of Texas, and then served for a year on the reportorial staff of *The Dallas* (Texas) *News*. There followed some seven years as a reporter on the *New York Times*, a period in a publishing house, and finally a period of fiction writing. In the past few years I have been contributing to many magazines and have written three novels."

The novels of Barry Benefield are: "Bugles in the Night," "The Chicken-Wagon Family," and "A Little Clown Lost." A few of his stories have been collected into a volume of short stories called *Short Turns*. One of his stories, "Down Bayou Dubac," has had the honor of being named by Grant Overton as one of the one hundred best short stories of all time.

CHRISTMAS EVE'S DAY

One winter Lige Dunklin loaded his wife and four-year-old son into his wagon and left the hills of Arkansas for the flat lands of Louisiana, which he had heard were fertile and easy to cultivate. His visible wealth was forty-odd dollars, a green-bodied wagon, Rhoda, the young white mare tinily spotted with red hairs which gave her that appearance called flea-bitten, and the old black mule named Tom.

In seven years Lige had cropped on five plantations in as many parishes. He kept moving on from

farm to farm because there never was anything noticeable left over after he had sold his cotton and paid for his supplies. It seemed to him that things worked in a vicious circle so far as he was concerned. If the crop was good the price was low, and if the price was high the yield was scanty. It often infuriated him to think of it. "Hit's the beatin'est thing," he would say to Amanda, his enormous sharp-pointed Adam's apple working up and down in his long brown neck and his gray eyes blinking rapidly. Maybe on another plantation things would, somehow, go better.

He had with him now not only the boy Kilmer, the name taken from a trusted kidney remedy, but a daughter of four. She was Peruna; and Lige, having begun to christen his children from medicine bottles, had already selected other revered names for future children—Lydia, Hood, Carter and Hostetter—because, being a farmer, he hoped for more boys than girls. But his wife died leaving him only Kilmer and Peruna.

Lige's spirit did not recover from the blow of her death. There was near him now not a single person intimately acquainted with and interested in the details of his life and work and he was very lonesome, and full of something he called "jandice," and so a year after her loss he started back in his wagon for the Arkansas hills, where he said he had "kinfolks." The old black mule, Tom, had laid his body down permanently one spring night following a hard day's plowing, but Rhody had providentially been philandering in the woods the autumn before and her son Buster, now a leggy yearling, yellow and very tame, walked with his aged mother along the white roads leading back to Arkansas.

Kilmer did most of the driving and whatever other work was necessary, for his pappy, saying frequently with a faint bitterness that he "felt like the devil before day," lay on the bedding under the canvas cover while the wagon worked slowly northward. Lige had waited to gather and sell his crops, so that it was December when the Dunklins reached Asphodel, in southern Arkansas.

Having crossed the state line, Lige's spirit revived somewhat and he began calling up at Kilmer on the high spring-seat to get along faster. Leaving Asphodel late one afternoon, the Dunklins camped for the night on the bank of a bayou three miles north of town. The next day Lige could not go on, and the following week he died.

For a few days Asphodel was keenly interested in Dunklin affairs. The sheriff put the wagon and team in Beamer's wagon-yard, pending the settlement of the Elijah Dunklin estate, including the bills of the doctor and the undertaker. While vague efforts were being made to locate his unknown relatives in the hills, whose surnames and addresses Kilmer did not know, and while letters were being sent to several institutions that cared for orphaned children the twelve-year-old boy was taken in by one family and Peruna by another on the opposite side of town.

She received an outfit of clothes, mostly new, of which she was ecstatically proud, and Kilmer too was polished up considerably. A barber removed the whitey-colored shag of hair that almost covered his ears and extended well down over his coat collar. His brass-toed brogans, his trousers that had been cut down from a pair of his pappy's, so that the two hip pockets stood abutting each other and were no longer

exactly hip pockets, his ancient and holey brown felt hat, all these and more were replaced with things entirely new, since the two sons of his host were smaller than he.

But within a week the two little Dunklins had lost their delightful center-stage position for Asphodel's adults and children alike. The grown-ups were busy with other matters, and the children with whom Peruna and her brother Kilmer came in contact were soon subjecting them to various juvenile barbarities by way of initiation.

Peruna dared not pour out her grievances to the awesome adults of the family that had taken her in, but Kilmer came over every day to see her and at some time while he was there she would get him away from the other children and passionately unburden herself.

Many things struggled in him to get said, though he could find few words in which to put them, and besides he talked so slowly that the more articulate Peruna had run on into a new subject before he had barely touched the one a minute older. Still he could sum up what he wanted to say by slipping his arm around her and squeezing her hard against him; and she understood, for always after that her wistful little kitten face would relax and brighten and presently she would be light-heartedly playing with the temporarily friendly enemy.

There was no comforter for Kilmer. Before his father died he had felt responsibility touch his shoulders, and he had unconsciously braced himself to meet the strain. Vaguely he had the notion that now he was the head of the family, that he was the court of last resort as to Dunklin matters, and that there was no one to whom he could complain or to whom

he could transfer his multitude of worries. The lonely brave child's necessarily stoic philosophy was developing rapidly.

Adult Asphodel would have been amazed to know that he had any worries; he and Peruna were deemed children of luck, the hills being held in scant esteem by the lowlanders. Kilmer covered his troubles with a sallow mask, his gray eyes seeking to see all things and to reveal nothing. For he was among strangers, he was suspicious, and he had caught dim intimations of something appalling that was about to befall him and Peruna.

One night at the supper table he noticed that Mr. Turley looked meaningly at his wife and then at him. She sent her own three children to a neighbor's house across the street with a message about the Christmas tree to be at the Baptist church. When they were gone she began talking in a voice sweeter, it seemed to Kilmer, than she had ever used before to him.

"Wouldn't you like to go away on the train, Kilmer, an' live in a great big buildin' where there were a lot of other nice boys, an' learn to be a carpenter or somethin'? Wouldn't that just be fine? Then you could be a rich man, maybe, an' come back an' take care of your little sister, an' buy her all kinds of pretty things. Wouldn't you just like to do that?"

Kilmer looked down at his plate a long time and under the table his big bony hands were twisting together and he felt his neck and ears and face getting prickly hot. He wanted to separate the question so that he could answer yes and no, but after a moment he whispered, without raising his head, "Yessum."

"That's a good boy. I knew you would."

"Would she be with me, Mis' Turley?" He still stared down at his plate, hanging on the answer,

though he knew what it would be. She had said, "Come *back* an' take care of your sister."

"No, Kilmer. Will Nevins is as rich as all outdoors an' they're goin' to keep her on; for a while, anyway, until she is bigger. But she'll have a good home until you can take care of her, an' we'll write you all about what happens. You needn't worry about your sister, Kilmer; she'll be looked after. You must trust us all for that."

He had heard only her "No"; the rest of it had been a mere murmuring in his ears. And before she had finished speaking he stood up, his head turned away from her, and mumbled, "'Scuse me," and went out into the dark hall. Putting on his overcoat and hat, he waited for a moment to steady himself.

"Downtown a minute," he called back into the dining-room. "See the things in the store." These were the words he had heard her own two boys use the night before.

Outside the air was clear and chilly. Turning his overcoat collar up about his neck and pulling his new black hat down over his eyes, Kilmer walked slowly down the sidewalk. Town, meaning the half-dozen business streets, was only five blocks away. He had had no mind to see the things in the stores; he had felt an overmastering desire to get away by himself and he had been afraid that if he didn't hurry Bob and Hal Turley would come back and want to drag him off with them.

Christmas was close at hand. Kilmer heard small firecrackers popping here and there about him—a mere foretaste of what was to come on Christmas Eve—and the wind bore faint whiffs of inciting powder scent to his nostrils and he heard the excited calls of gangs of boys. But he went on his way, his head

down, scuttling through dark alleys to escape notice. He was bound for Beamer's wagon-yard.

On that side of town, where the stores were all closed at night, there was a quiet darkness welcome to him. Opening the gate, he slipped in, latching it behind him. In the long line of stalls running around three sides of the yard he heard horses and mules steadily crunching, one of them now and then squealing furiously at a nosy neighbor, following with a futile grunting kick. Locating Rhody's stall, he eased himself up into the shallow feedbox for small grain that was now empty. Rhody had passed on to her dessert of hay in the deep box next the little one.

It was dark in the stall, the musky smell of animals and the sharp ammoniac odor of manure were good in his nostrils, and he sat there recklessly banging his new shoes against the slanting planks underneath the box. Old Rhody knew that here was a creature who had often supplied her with food and water, and tickled her skin delightfully with curry-comb and brush; she was not afraid, and she began making up to him, whinnying huskily far down in her throat and nuzzling his shoulder with her nose. But even here, all by himself, Kilmer could see no way out of the horror that awaited him; and presently he reached his arms around her neck, laid his cheek against her warm head and cried as if the old mare were really his mother.

Two days later came Christmas Eve's Day, as it is called in the South, and the excited Turley household was early astir. Mr. Turley looked forward to a big day in his "notion" store, his wife was flutteringly concerned about cakes and pies and the church Christmas tree, and Bob and Hal were to peddle oranges and apples and firecrackers from baskets, "on commission," they grandly explained.

By nine o'clock the house was empty except for the negro cook fuming in the kitchen and Kilmer. He was in the boys' room feverishly removing the new clothes that had been given him and putting on the old ones that had come up with him from Louisiana; his face set and his lips moving with half-sensed words that rushed about in his head and tumbled out in jerky mumblings.

Many people were coming and going through Mr. Beamer's store, and the yard was nearly full of wagons and buggies. No one paid any attention to the silent boy who now and then ran into the big barn-like store, picked up an armful of bedding or kitchen utensils and loaded them into a canvas-covered wagon that stood near the gate. And no hand was raised to stop Kilmer when finally he drove out and away.

Somehow he had gathered the impression that though the wagon and horses had been his pappy's they were now not exactly his, and he had the feeling that in taking them he was doing something forbidden and dangerous. Troubled but unhesitant, he moved swiftly and surely, a hard fierce look in his slate-gray eyes.

Standing behind the seat and under the canvas to hide himself as much as possible, he drove down the street as if he meant to leave town, expecting every moment to hear somebody come yelling after him to stop. But presently he was well away from the yard, and no one had hailed him. Urging Rhody and Buster to a trot, he circled the town and eased the wagon cautiously into the alley behind the Nevins home, putting the cowbarn and the garage between it and the great white house.

When he had found Peruna and whispered his

message to her he still had to wait while she found and put on her old clothes and slipped away.

But by twelve o'clock they were a mile out of town, going north along the road that Lige had followed as far as he could. That seemed a very long time ago to Kilmer.

"Whur air we a-goin' to, buddie? I reckon you can tell me now."

"Sitta, we air a-goin' home to pappy's kinfolks, whur he wuz aimin' to go, away up yander in the mountings. I ricollect a little bit about hit, and he tole me a whole lot more."

"What's our kinfolks' names, buddie? Same as ourn?"

"I reckon so, sitta. I know Uncle Buck an' Aunt Emmy an' Cousin Lem, but I don't ricollect nary a hind name if ever I knowed 'em."

"How come you decide to go?"

Peruna's pale-faced brother looked a long time out in front of him before he tried to answer. He wasn't sure he ought to tell her anything about what had threatened them. But she caught his right arm in both her hands and shook it. "How come, buddie?"

"Would you want me to go away, sitta, on a railroad train an' stay I don't know how long, hunderds o' miles from whur you air?"

"How come I couldn't go on the railroad train along with you, buddie?"

"I reckon I couldn't tell you that, sitta; for I jist don't rightly know. Anyhow, Mis' Turley an' Mr. Turley an' ever'body, I reckon, wuz a-aimin' to send me away an' keep you in Asphodel." His voice had the ring of fierce certitude about it.

Kilmer stared out along in the road in front of

him, and no word came from his little sister standing by his side behind the seat. He wished she would say something. After a while he looked down at her, but the faded pink sunbonnet hid her face; and when he stooped down and peered under the bonnet brim her lips were pressed tremblingly together and her darkened blue eyes were welling round tears over their lower lids.

"Don't you mind, sitta, don't you mind a durn bit whut they been a-aimin' to do, 'cause they hain't a-goin' to do it." He put his right arm around her shoulder and pulled her hard against him. "Now, now, sitta, don't cry. We air a-goin' home to pappy's kinfolks away up yander in the mountings; you an' me, sitta, together. We air that."

Kilmer could say no more, and she stumbled back and lay on the pile of bedding crying. He yelled furiously at Rhody and Buster, snatching the lines to make them trot.

"How come," he called back over his shoulder presently, "how come you cry now, sitta? Don't you *want* to come along with me?"

"I'm afeared—I'm jist afeared they might ketch us yit an' send you away on the railroad train."

"Giddap, Rhody," he bellowed. "Giddap, Buster, afore I bust you wide open." He wiped the back of his right hand across his eyes.

In the middle of the afternoon, stopping at a way-side store standing among three or four weather-grayed houses in a clearing of the pine forest that circled blackly around the horizon in all directions, Kilmer spent some of Lige's last ten dollars that he had held on to grimly through his Asphodel days. With a bushel of corn in the shuck, a dime's worth of crackers, two bits' worth of cheese and three of those

tremendous brown ginger cakes called stage planks, he pushed on into the dimly known North.

Now and then a wagon or a rattling car passed him, going away from town, but no one questioned him and he was beginning to feel easier about possible pursuit and recapture, though he "calculated" that when Mr. Beamer's nigger set out to feed Rhody and Buster that night the flight would be discovered. He aimed, though, to be far away in the woods by then, and besides, neither Mr. Beamer nor the sheriff nor the mayor nor anybody at all would know for a day or so which road he had taken. By dogs, he'd beat 'em yit. He quit his standing position behind the high spring seat, and helping Peruna up on it he settled himself comfortably beside her and clucked almost gayly at Rhody and Buster, very proud of himself and quietly exalted.

After a while, the sharp chill of coming night settling through the woods, Kilmer began thinking of a fire and preparations for camping. Camping would not be so simple now, he felt, as when his pappy was with him, for he would have to hide, lest pursuers come upon him off his guard. From time to time streams of water, which he called branches, crossed the dipping road, and when the country boy's sense of time told him that the day was nearly done he left his sister in charge of the team while he followed a branch back into the pine forest, behind a little hill, to see if he could find a place "fitten to camp in"; and presently Rhody and Buster, free of harness, stood grinding corn for themselves in the feedbox bolted on the tailpiece of the wagon-bed, and Peruna and her brother Kilmer sat before the camp fire watching the fat pine knots spout red pointed flames up into the early black night.

The fearful runaways had merely nibbled at the cheese and crackers and one stage plank during the afternoon, but now they could take their ease as they dined. On the edge of the light Kilmer sat, bare-headed, his back against a tree-trunk, his knees drawn up and soft little Peruna between them. Their left hands each held a big piece of cheese and their right hands an installment of the complementary crackers, and by the side of them were the reserves of crackers, two whole stage planks and, mercifully, a tin bucket filled with water to wash their dinners down.

They had been hungry and now they were eating. They had been afraid and now they felt secure. Peace and freedom and piercing happiness were with Peruna and her brother Kilmer by the red fire, and all manner of wild things struggled within them to get said, but they had no words to fit the great white joys fluttering in their hearts. So Kilmer could only pat his right foot on the ground as if he were keeping time with some tune lilting through the woods, the long slim crescent of brass on the toe of his brogan winking in the light; and Peruna could only lean her black head against his chest and look up at him now and then with worshipful eyes crowding with shining words that needed no saying.

"Like it, sitta?"

"Uh-huh!" She knocked her head vigorously against his chest for emphasis, and a light was on his face that did not come from the fire.

Occasionally they noted a homebound wagon passing along the road on the other side of the little hill—the thin voices of children, the loud ringing voices of extremely exhilarated men, the high clear voices of women sometimes singing, the clink of trace-chains, a new accordion or banjo or fiddle being tried out, tin horns, thumping little drums.

Once after a wagon had passed Peruna looked inquiringly up at Kilmer. "You reckon, buddie, *he* will find us away out here in the woods tonight?"

"We wouldn't mind if *he* did find us, would we, sitta?"

"You reckon' he *will*, buddie? We ain't got no chimbley or nothin', an' we ain't been here long. Maybe he won't know whur we're *at*."

The head of the Dunklin family felt vaguely that the conversation was on dangerous ground; not because he disbelieved in the existence of the saint of childhood but because the circumstances were certainly unusually unpropitious. So he fell back upon the ancient trick of avoiding a question with a question. "What you want him to fetch you, sitta?"

"Well, last Christmas he fotch me a doll an' a napple, an' a norange, an' a big stick o' banana candy, an' I reckon maybe I'd kinda like them same things again; only if he *could* jist drap in a breastpin with blue sparklin' di'monds, hit'd be mighty nice."

"Breastpin! Shucks, little gals don't wear no breastpins, sitta."

"Yes-siree-bob, they do so, buddie; an' besides couldn't I keep it till I'm a grown lady, answer me that?"

Well he knew there was no adequate answer to that, and he attempted none, but sat staring wistfully over her head into the fire.

"Now, buddie, tell whut you want him to fetch you."

"A knife with a corkscrew in the back o' the handle, an' a red necktie, an' a package of firecrackers, an' a napple, an' a norange, an' a stick of lemon candy so as we could swap each other some an' have two kinds apiece."

"My, *wouldn't* that be fine!"

"An' he ought to fetch Buster somethin', too, if he's a-comin', 'cause Buster ain't nothin' but a little ole boy-horse. Why, sitta, he ain't nigh as old as you."

"Let's ask him to, buddie; an' pore ole Rhody, maybe she'd cry like ever'thing if he left her out."

"Buster 'ud jist about tear up gourd vines if he had a string o' them little bells on his collar like I seen 'em in the store."

"Yes, an' I 'low ole Rhody 'ud priss along the road to beat six bits if bells wuz a-jinglin' on her collar too. Come on, buddie, let's *do* somethin' about hit."

It appeared doubtful to tidy little Peruna that the great visitor would have any "truck" with stockings not freshly laundered, so in a bucket of water from the branch she washed hers and Kilmer's, standing barelegged in her shoes and tinily shrieking at the coldness of the water on her toy white arms. Kilmer planted two forked sticks close to the fire and placed a pole on them to hold the stockings until they should be dry. Then he went down to the branch and cut a small holly tree, dug out a hole in the ground, set the tree in it and after much pounding of the loosened earth with the axe made it reasonably safe against any wind that might come or the weight of any gift that might be put upon it during the night.

No pencil could be found in the pockets of the runaways or in the supply-box of the wagon, so the collars of Rhody and Buster were laid in the light on the ground by the tree in the desperate hope that they would be hints not too delicate to be effective. As for themselves, in default of specific requests put clearly upon paper, they hung both their stockings

prominently on strong limbs of the tree and decided to be satisfied with any changes that might be made in their two lists of wants, though with mystic faith they several times casually repeated in rather loud self-conscious voices all the items for the benefit of whomsoever might hear. They had known of such messages into the void to have effect.

And now they were ready. Kilmer had built up the fire afresh, clearing away the pine straw from around it so that it could not spread, and stacking a great pile of fat knots and hard wood near-by to keep it going through the night. The light glistened on the glossy green leaves and the red berries of the holly tree, the wind sang low far up in the nodding pine-tops, the branch at the foot of the hill hurried along its course, pishing and pshawing and clucking at the sticks and stones in its way, like a busy and hearty old woman enjoying her own voice.

Kilmer and Peruna stood by the wagon a while looking and listening, and then they slowly climbed over a front wheel, laid a thick slab of bedding smelling of hay on the floor of the wagon, inserted themselves between its folds, and prepared to await the issue with whatever patience they could command. They did not, alas, say their prayers, and there was no one to remind them, but surely some things may be taken for granted.

They were not afraid. As for Peruna, she lay close to her brother Kilmer; and as for him, he was the head of the family, he was used to the woods, and besides, listen as hard as he could, he heard nothing to alarm him.

Presently Kilmer felt the taut small body relax against him. Peruna moistened her mouth, murmured something about a doll with long yaller hair

and drifted swiftly away into a sleep as sweet and sound and deep as, according to much testimony in fine black type, should have been connoted by her name.

But he lay awake for a long time. He must make up the fire once more after a while, he told himself, and besides he was already trying to think what he might say to soften the shock for her if indeed no visible miracle came to pass that night by his camp fire. The air was keen on his face, the covering was warm, it was softly dark under the canvas, and several times he caught himself dropping off to sleep. "Shucks!" he always said at himself, and if he could have looked in a mirror he would have seen his lips curled in scorn at his weakness.

An hour or so later he stole from under the covers, slipped on his shoes, and piled wood high on the fire so that well into the night it might remain a flaming signal in lieu of a chimney and continue a spot of beckoning red until the lighted morning of Christmas Day. Then he ran back to the warm bed, his teeth knocking together and his back all goosey, and after that the long rolling waves of the dark night closed in on him, and when again sleep stole near to call him he gave up and let himself go and go, oh so gladly.

And while the two innocents with the famous names slept in secret security countless miracles came to pass outside the wagon. Great red and yellow flames, and now and then a thin green one, leaped and wheeled and danced, and at the heart of the fire a thousand towering castles shaped themselves into loveliness and faded unseen into gray ashes. At the foot of the hill where the branch ran into a little clearing of the forest, starlight that had been on the

way for years and years fell upon the face of a ripple, burst into shining beauty for an unnoted fraction of a second and helped a minnow around a dangerous turning of his course. Under the earth pine trees were making from sand and water giant dark plumes to wave at the moon, and high above the earth golden suns marched on through that stately figure begun millions of years ago and to be finished millions of years hence. And though at daybreak no miracle had come to the tree of the sleepers, a wonderful story had been given to one of them and, more wonderful still, quick words to tell it with.

Rising stealthily and peeping through the puckered hole in the back of the canvas, just to make sure, Kilmer sighed and slipped back under the quilts, hoping that Peruna would not be awake. But he felt her hand searching for his, and turning he saw in the dim light that her questioning eyes were upon him.

"Did he come, buddie? Did he come at all?"

"Long, long time ago he come, he did. It was all black and cold outside, an' I got up to put some wood on the fire, an' he slid down right through the trees with little bells a-jinglin' an' a-janglin'. I was a-standin' there by the fire a-lookin' at him, but he went right on a-liftin' things outen a big bran sack in his sleigh. I seen him slip into the stockin's your doll with the long yaller hair an' my knife an' ever'thing an' a lots more besides; an' then, kinda smilin' in his white whiskers, he laid a brown strop all covered with shiny tinklin' bells on ole Rhody's collar an' one on Buster's. After that he stood a while, like he was a-studyin' somethin'; an' all at once he begun puttin' the things back in the bran sack.

"'How come you takin' 'em all back, mister?' I called to him. An' he said, 'I'm a-goin' to save 'em

for you an' your little sister. Nobody else shall have a single one o' them,' he said, 'an' when you-all git settled I'll fetch 'em to you again. You-all,' he said, 'ain't a-goin' to lose nary a one o' them, no-siree-bob, you ain't,' he said, kinda laughin' in his white whiskers.

"An' then them reindeers of hisn, six or eight or maybe ten o' them, set in to pawin' at the ground an' a-shakin' their heads so as you could hear their horns a-knockin' an' a-scrapin' together, like they knowed it wuz time to go; an' he jumped in his sleigh, all red it wuz, an' went slidin' out through the pines, risin' higher an' higher, the little bells a-jinglin' and a-janglin', an' then he wuz gone."

Kilmer waited breathlessly to hear what Peruna might say. "I 'lowed I heard bells in the night, buddie." She whispered it.

"I shore am glad he's a-savin' our things till we git settled, ain't you, sitta? An' I believe ever' word he said. Don't you, sitta? He was a good ole man; I could tell by the look o' him. Do you believe, sitta?"

"I believe, buddie." She was looking into his eyes, and hers were round and solemn and clear. "My, but I wisht *I'd* a-seen them deers."

Before the sun had risen halfway to the tops of the tall pines two automobiles overtook the covered wagon. The fussy buzzing little sheriff put a negro on the wagon to drive it, and he spluttered away in Mr. Beamer's small car. For passengers back to Asphodel Mr. Nevins had only Peruna and her brother Kilmer, who slid about on the vast deeply cushioned rear seat, his right arm firmly clasping her waist. Mr. Nevins kept looking back at them, and after a while he said, this time without turning his

head, "Hold her tight, Kilmer; you two must stick together."

"Yes, sir; we aim to."

The next morning Peruna and her brother Kilmer had evidence that the good old man had discovered the fact that they were already settled.

QUESTIONS

1. What is the theme of this story?
2. Show qualities in Kilmer that will make for success.
3. Where does the plot begin?
4. Why does the author go into such detail in leading up to the plot?
5. Did Kilmer do wrong in attempting to run away with his sister?
6. What was the story about Santa Claus which Kilmer told Peruna on Christmas morning?
7. Why did he tell her this story? What gave him the idea for it?
8. What do you think prompted Mr. Nevins to go in search of the children?
9. What suggestion does the conclusion offer for the future welfare of Kilmer and Peruna?
10. Illustrate instances showing the devotion of the children to each other.
11. Write a character sketch of Kilmer.
12. How would you characterize Kilmer's father?
13. Point out some particularly good descriptive passages in the story.
14. What does the use of dialect add to the story?
15. Compare this dialect with that used in other stories in this collection.
16. What might be other appropriate titles to this story?
17. Do you think Penrod or Gareth would have had the courage to carry out Kilmer's plan?
18. Compare the treatment accorded Kilmer by the Turleys with that accorded Peruna by the Nevins family.
19. What reason can you give for liking or disliking this story?
20. Have you read any other stories about this general section of the country, written by other authors? Be prepared to tell the class about them.

A FRIEND OF NAPOLEON

BY

RICHARD CONNELL

RICHARD CONNELL

(1893-)

Richard Connell was born in Poughkeepsie, New York, October 17, 1893. All of his spare time during his youth was spent in the office of the daily newspaper in Poughkeepsie, of which his father was editor. While still a pupil in high school, the young man was made sporting editor of his father's paper, and was also the author of several stories which appeared in the columns of the same daily.

At the age of eighteen, Richard Connell entered Harvard. Here he gained further experience in writing, for he was editor of the *Harvard Lampoon*, Harvard's well-known humorous publication. In his senior year he became editorial chairman of the college daily newspaper, *The Crimson*.

Graduating from Harvard in 1915, Mr. Connell went to New York and took up newspaper work on a larger scale. He became a reporter and advertising writer, and it was at this time, he says, "while covering the sale of the famous old Eden Musée, that I got the idea which I later developed into the story, 'A Friend of Napoleon.'"

Mr. Connell saw active service overseas during the World War. He feels, however, that his best work in the service of his country was the editing of a small camp paper, called *The Gas Attack*.

He married in 1920, and soon turned his entire efforts to fiction writing. When not travelling, the Connells make their home in the quiet surroundings of Green's Farms, Connecticut.

The stories of Richard Connell, noteworthy for their originality, have been well received. Three volumes have been collected, entitled "The Sin of M. Pettipon," "Apes and Angels," and "Vanity."

A FRIEND OF NAPOLEON

All Paris held no happier man than Papa Chibou. He loved his work—that was why. Other men might say—did say, in fact—that for no amount of money would they take his job; no, not for ten thousand francs for a single night. It would turn their

hair white and give them permanent goose flesh, they averred. On such men Papa Chibou smiled with pity. What stomach had such zestless ones for adventure? What did they know of romance? Every night of his life Papa Chibou walked with adventure and held the hand of romance.

Every night he conversed intimately with Napoleon; with Marat and his fellow revolutionists; with Carpentier and Cæsar; with Victor Hugo and Lloyd George; with Foch and with Bigarre, the Apache murderer whose unfortunate penchant for making ladies into curry led him to the guillotine; with Louis XVI and with Madame Lablanche, who poisoned eleven husbands and was working to make it an even dozen when the police deterred her; with Marie Antoinette and with sundry early Christian martyrs who lived in sweet resignation in electric-lighted catacombs under the sidewalk of the Boulevard des Capucines in the very heart of Paris. They were all his friends and he had a word and a joke for each of them, as on his nightly rounds he washed their faces and dusted out their ears, for Papa Chibou was night watchman at the Musée Pratoency—"The World in Wax. Admission, one franc. Children and soldiers, half price. Nervous ladies enter the Chamber of Horrors at their own risk. One is prayed not to touch the wax figures or to permit dogs to circulate in the establishment."

He had been at the Musée Pratoency so long that he looked like a wax figure himself. Visitors not infrequently mistook him for one and poked him with inquisitive fingers or canes. He did not deceive them; he did not budge. Spartanlike he stood stiff under the pokes; he was rather proud of being taken for a citizen of the world of wax, which was,

indeed, a much more real world to him than the world of flesh and blood. He had cheeks like the small red wax pippins used in table decorations, round eyes, slightly poppy, and smooth white hair, like a wig. He was a diminutive man and, with his horseshoe moustache of surprising luxuriance, looked like a gnome going to a fancy-dress ball as a small walrus. Children who saw him flitting about the dim passages that led to the catacombs were sure he was a brownie.

His title "Papa" was a purely honorary one, given him because he had worked some twenty-five years at the museum. He was unwed, and slept at the museum in a niche of a room just off the Roman arena where papier-mâché lions and tigers breakfasted on assorted martyrs. At night, as he dusted off the lions and tigers, he rebuked them sternly for their lack of delicacy.

"Ah," he would say, cuffing the ear of the largest lion, which was earnestly trying to devour a grandfather and an infant simultaneously, "sort of a pig that you are! I am ashamed of you, eater of babies. You will go to hell for this, Monsieur Lion, you may depend upon it. Monsieur Satan will poach you like an egg, I promise you. Ah, you bad one, you species of a camel, you Apache, you profiteer——"

Then Papa Chibou would bend over and very tenderly address the elderly martyr who was lying beneath the lion's paws and exhibiting signs of distress and, say, "Patience, my brave one. It does not take long to be eaten, and then, consider: The good Lord will take you up to heaven, and there, if you wish, you yourself can eat a lion every day. You are a man of holiness, Phillibert. You will be Saint Phil-

libert, beyond doubt, and then won't you laugh at lions!"

Philibert was the name Papa Chibou had given to the venerable martyr; he had bestowed names on all of them. Having consoled Philibert, he would softly dust the fat wax infant whom the lion was in the act of bolting.

"Courage, my poor little Jacob," Papa Chibou would say. "It is not every baby that can be eaten by a lion; and in such a good cause too. Don't cry, little Jacob. And remember: When you get inside Monsieur Lion, kick and kick and kick! That will give him a great sickness of the stomach. Won't that be fun, little Jacob?"

So he went about his work, chatting with them all, for he was fond of them all, even of Bigarre the Apache and the other grisly inmates of the Chamber of Horrors. He did chide the criminals for their regrettable proclivities in the past and warn them that he would tolerate no such conduct in his museum. It was not his museum of course. Its owner was Monsieur Pratoucy, a long-necked, melancholy marabou of a man who sat at the ticket window and took in the francs. But, though the legal title to the place might be vested in Monsieur Pratoucy, at night Papa Chibou was the undisputed monarch of his little wax kingdom. When the last patron had left and the doors were closed Papa Chibou began to pay calls on his subjects; across the silent halls he called greetings to them:

"Ah, Bigarre, you old rascal, how goes the world? And you, Madame Marie Antoinette; did you enjoy a good day? Good evening, Monsieur Cæsar; aren't you chilly in that costume of yours? Ah, Monsieur Charlemagne, I trust your health continues to be of the best."

His closest friend of them all was Napoleon. The others he liked; to Napoleon he was devoted. It was a friendship cemented by the years, for Napoleon had been in the museum as long as Papa Chibou. Other figures might come and go at the behest of a fickle public, but Napoleon held his place, albeit he had been relegated to a dim corner.

He was not much of a Napoleon. He was smaller even than the original Napoleon, and one of his ears had come in contact with a steam radiator and as a result it was gnarled into a lump the size of a hickory nut; it was a perfect example of that phenomenon of the prize ring, the cauliflower ear. He was supposed to be at St. Helena and he stood on a papier-mâché rock, gazing out wistfully over a non-existent sea. One hand was thrust into the bosom of his long-tailed coat, the other hung at his side. Skin-tight breeches, once white but white no longer, fitted snugly over his plump bump of waxen abdomen. A Napoleonic hat, frayed by years of conscientious brushing by Papa Chibou, was perched above a pensive waxen brow.

Papa Chibou had been attracted to Napoleon from the first. There was something so forlorn about him. Papa Chibou had been forlorn, too, in his first days at the museum. He had come from Bouloire, in the south of France, to seek his fortune as a grower of asparagus in Paris. He was a simple man of scant schooling and he had fancied that there were asparagus beds along the Paris boulevards. There were none. So necessity and chance brought him to the Museum Pratoucy to earn his bread and wine, and romance and his friendship for Napoleon kept him there.

The first day Papa Chibou worked at the museum

Monsieur Pratoucy took him round to tell him about the figures.

"This," said the proprietor, "is Toulon, the strangler. This is Mademoiselle Merle, who shot the Russian duke. This is Charlotte Corday, who stabbed Marat in the bathtub; that gory gentleman is Marat." Then they had come to Napoleon. Monsieur Pratoucy was passing him by.

"And who is this sad-looking gentleman?" asked Papa Chibou.

"Name of a name! Do you not know?"

"But no, monsieur."

"But that is Napoleon himself."

That night, his first in the museum, Papa Chibou went round and said to Napoleon, "Monsieur, I do not know with what crimes you are charged, but I, for one, refuse to think you are guilty of them."

So began their friendship. Thereafter he dusted Napoleon with especial care and made him his confidant. One night in his twenty-fifth year at the museum Papa Chibou said to Napoleon, "You observed those two lovers who were in here to-night, did you not, my good Napoleon? They thought it was too dark in this corner for us to see, didn't they? But we saw him take her hand and whisper to her. Did she blush? You were near enough to see. She is pretty, isn't she, with her bright dark eyes? She is not a French girl; she is an American; one can tell that by the way she doesn't roll her *r*'s. The young man, he is French; and a fine young fellow he is, or I'm no judge. He is so slender and erect, and he has courage, for he wears the war cross; you noticed that, didn't you? He is very much in love, that is sure. This is not the first time I have seen them. They have met here before, and they are

wise, for is this not a spot most romantic for the meetings of lovers?"

Papa Chibou flicked a speck of dust from Napoleon's good ear.

"Ah," he exclaimed, "it must be a thing most delicious to be young and in love! Were you ever in love, Napoleon? No? Ah, what a pity! I know, for I, too, have had no luck in love. Ladies prefer the big, strong men, don't they? Well, we must help these two young people, Napoleon. We must see that they have the joy we missed. So do not let them know you are watching them if they come here to-morrow night. I will pretend I do not see."

Each night after the museum had closed, Papa Chibou gossiped with Napoleon about the progress of the love affair between the American girl with the bright dark eyes and the slender, erect young Frenchman.

"All is not going well," Papa Chibou reported one night, shaking his head. "There are obstacles to their happiness. He has little money, for he is just beginning his career. I heard him tell her so to-night. And she has an aunt who has other plans for her. What a pity if fate should part them! But you know how unfair fate can be, don't you, Napoleon? If only we had some money we might be able to help him, but I, myself, have no money, and I suppose you, too, were poor, since you look so sad. But attend; to-morrow is a day most important for them. He has asked her if she will marry him, and she has said that she will tell him to-morrow night at nine in this very place. I heard them arrange it all. If she does not come it will mean no. I think we shall see two very happy ones here to-morrow night, eh, Napoleon?"

The next night, when the last patron had gone and Papa Chibou had locked the outer door, he came to Napoleon, and tears were in his eyes.

"You saw, my friend?" broke out Papa Chibou. "You observed? You saw his face and how pale it grew? You saw his eyes and how they held a thousand agonies? He waited until I had to tell him three times that the museum was closing. I felt like an executioner, I assure you; and he looked up at me as only a man condemned can look. He went out with heavy feet; he was no longer erect. For she did not come, Napoleon; that girl with the bright dark eyes did not come. Our little comedy of love has become a tragedy, monsieur. She has refused him, that poor, that unhappy young man."

On the following night at closing time Papa Chibou came hurrying to Napoleon; he was a-quiver with excitement.

"She was here!" he cried. "Did you see her? She was here and she kept watching and watching; but, of course, he did not come. I could tell from his stricken face last night that he had no hope. At last I dared to speak to her. I said to her, 'Mademoiselle, a thousand pardons for the very great liberty I am taking, but it is my duty to tell you—he was here last night and he waited till closing time. He was all of a paleness, mademoiselle, and he chewed his fingers in his despair. He loves you, mademoiselle; a cow could see that. He is devoted to you; and he is a fine young fellow, you can take an old man's word for it. Do not break his heart, mademoiselle.' She grasped my sleeve. 'You know him, then?' she asked. 'You know where I can find him?' 'Alas, no,' I said. 'I have only seen him here with you.' 'Poor boy!' she kept saying. 'Poor boy!'

Oh, what shall I do? I am in dire trouble. I love him, monsieur.' 'But you did not come,' I said. 'I could not,' she replied, and she was weeping. 'I live with an aunt; a rich tiger she is, monsieur, and she wants me to marry a count, a fat leering fellow who smells of attar of roses and garlic. My aunt locked me in my room. And now I have lost the one I love, for he will think I have refused him, and he is so proud he will never ask me again.' 'But surely you could let him know?' I suggested. 'But I do not know where he lives,' she said. 'And in a few days my aunt is taking me off to Rome, where the count is, and oh, dear, oh, dear, oh, dear——' And she wept on my shoulder. Napoleon, that poor little American girl with the bright dark eyes."

Papa Chibou began to brush the Napoleonic hat.

"I tried to comfort her," he said. "I told her that the young man would surely find her, that he would come back and haunt the spot where they had been happy, but I was telling her what I did not believe. 'He may come to-night,' I said, 'or to-morrow.' She waited until it was time to close the museum. You saw her face as she left; did it not touch you in the heart?"

Papa Chibou was downcast when he approached Napoleon the next night.

"She waited again till closing time," he said, "but he did not come. It made me suffer to see her as the hours went by and her hope ebbed away. At last she had to leave, and at the door she said to me, 'If you see him here again, please give him this.' She handed me this card, Napoleon. See, it says, 'I am at the Villa Rosina, Rome. I love you. Nina.' Ah, the poor, poor young man. We must keep a sharp watch for him, you and I."

Papa Chibou and Napoleon did watch at the Musée Pratoucy night after night. One, two, three, four, five nights they watched for him. A week, a month, more months passed, and he did not come. There came instead one day news of so terrible a nature that it left Papa Chibou ill and trembling. The Musée Pratoucy was going to have to close its doors.

"It is no use," said Monsieur Pratoucy, when he dealt this blow to Papa Chibou. "I cannot go on. Already I owe much, and my creditors are clamouring. People will no longer pay a franc to see a few old dummies when they can see an army of red Indians, Arabs, brigands and dukes in the moving pictures. Monday the Musée Pratoucy closes its doors for ever."

"But, Monsieur Pratoucy," exclaimed Papa Chibou, aghast, "what about the people here? What will become of Marie Antoinette, and the martyrs, and Napoleon?"

"Oh," said the proprietor, "I'll be able to realize a little on them, perhaps. On Tuesday they will be sold at auction. Someone may buy them to melt up."

"To melt up, monsieur?" Papa Chibou faltered.

"But certainly. What else are they good for?"

"But surely monsieur will want to keep them; a few of them anyhow?"

"Keep them? Aunt of the devil, but that is a droll idea! Why should any one want to keep shabby old wax dummies?"

"I thought," murmured Papa Chibou, "that you might keep just one—Napoleon, for example—as a remembrance——"

"Uncle of Satan, but you have odd notions! To keep a souvenir of one's bankruptcy!"

Papa Chibou went away to his little hole in the wall. He sat on his cot and fingered his moustache for an hour; the news had left him dizzy, had made a cold vacuum under his belt buckle. From under his cot, at last, he took a wooden box, unlocked three separate locks, and extracted a sock. From the sock he took his fortune, his hoard of big copper ten-centime pieces, tips he had saved for years. He counted them over five times most carefully; but no matter how he counted them he could not make the total come to more than two hundred and twenty-one francs.

That night he did not tell Napoleon the news. He did not tell any of them. Indeed he acted even more cheerful than usual as he went from one figure to another. He complimented Madame Lablanche, the lady of the poisoned spouses, on how well she was looking. He even had a kindly word to say to the lion that was eating the two martyrs.

"After all, Monsieur Lion," he said, "I suppose it is as proper for you to eat martyrs as it is for me to eat bananas. Probably bananas do not enjoy being eaten any more than martyrs do. In the past I have said harsh things to you, Monsieur Lion; I am sorry I said them, now. After all, it is hardly your fault that you eat people. You were born with an appetite for martyrs, just as I was born poor." And he gently tweaked the lion's papier-mâché ear.

When he came to Napoleon, Papa Chibou brushed him with unusual care and thoroughness. With a moistened cloth he polished the imperial nose, and he took pains to be gentle with the cauliflower ear. He told Napoleon the latest joke he had heard at the cabmen's café where he ate his breakfast of onion soup, and, as the joke was mildly improper, nudged Napoleon in the ribs, and winked at him.

"We are men of the world, eh, old friend?" said Papa Chibou. "We are philosophers, is that not so?" Then he added, "We take what life sends us, and sometimes it sends hardships."

He wanted to talk more with Napoleon, but somehow he couldn't; abruptly, in the midst of a joke, Papa Chibou broke off and hurried down into the depths of the Chamber of Horrors and stood there for a very long time staring at an unfortunate native of Siam being trodden on by an elephant.

It was not until the morning of the auction sale that Papa Chibou told Napoleon. Then, while the crowd was gathering, he slipped up to Napoleon in his corner and laid his hand on Napoleon's arm.

"One of the hardships of life has come to us, old friend," he said. "They are going to try to take you away. But, courage! Papa Chibou does not desert his friends. Listen!" And Papa Chibou patted his pocket, which gave forth a jingling sound.

The bidding began. Close to the auctioneer's desk stood a man, a wizened, rodent-eyed man with a diamond ring and dirty fingers. Papa Chibou's heart went down like an express elevator when he saw him, for he knew that the rodent-eyed man was Mogen, the junk king of Paris. The auctioneer in a voice slightly encumbered by adenoids, began to sell the various items in a hurried, perfunctory manner.

"Item 3 is Julius Cæsar, toga and sandals thrown in. How much am I offered? One hundred and fifty francs? Dirt cheap for a Roman emperor, that is. Who'll make it two hundred? Thank you, Monsieur Mogen. The noblest Roman of them all is going at two hundred francs. Are you all through at two hundred? Going, going, gone! Julius Cæsar is sold to Monsieur Mogen."

Papa Chibou patted Cæsar's back sympathetically.

"You are worth more, my good Julius," he said in a whisper. "Good-bye."

He was encouraged. If a comparatively new Cæsar brought only two hundred, surely an old Napoleon would bring no more.

The sale progressed rapidly. Monsieur Mogen bought the entire Chamber of Horrors. He bought Marie Antoinette, and the martyrs and lions. Papa Chibou, standing near Napoleon, withstood the strain of waiting by chewing his moustache.

The sale was very nearly over and Monsieur Mogen had bought every item, when, with a yawn, the auctioneer droned: "Now, ladies and gentlemen, we come to Item 573, a collection of odds and ends, mostly damaged goods, to be sold in one lot. The lot includes one stuffed owl that seems to have moulted a bit; one Spanish shawl, torn; the head of an Apache who has been guillotined, body missing; a small wax camel, no humps; and an old wax figure of Napoleon, with one ear damaged. What am I offered for the lot?"

Papa Chibou's heart stood still. He laid a reassuring hand on Napoleon's shoulder.

"The fool," he whispered in Napoleon's good ear, "to put you in the same class as a camel, no humps, and an owl. But never mind. It is lucky for us, perhaps."

"How much for this assortment?" asked the auctioneer.

"One hundred francs," said Mogen, the junk king.

"One hundred and fifty," said Papa Chibou, trying to be calm. He had never spent so vast a sum all at once in his life.

Mogen fingered the material in Napoleon's coat. "Two hundred," said the junk king.

"Are you all through at two hundred?" queried the auctioneer.

"Two hundred and twenty-one," called Papa Chibou. His voice was a husky squeak.

Mogen from his rodent eyes glared at Papa Chibou with annoyance and contempt. He raised his dirtiest finger—the one with the diamond ring on it—toward the auctioneer.

"Monsieur Mogen bids two hundred and twenty-five," droned the auctioneer. "Do I hear two hundred and fifty?"

Papa Chibou hated the world. The auctioneer cast a look in his direction.

"Two hundred and twenty-five is bid," he repeated. "Are you all through at two hundred and twenty-five? Going, going—sold to Monsieur Mogen for two hundred and twenty-five francs."

Stunned, Papa Chibou heard Mogen say casually, "I'll send round my carts for this stuff in the morning."

This stuff!

Dully and with an aching breast Papa Chibou went to his room down by the Roman arena. He packed his few clothes into a box. Last of all he slowly took from his cap the brass badge he had worn for so many years; it bore the words "Chief Watchman." He had been proud of that title, even if it was slightly inaccurate; he had been not only the chief but the only watchman. Now he was nothing. It was hours before he summoned up the energy to take his box round to the room he had rented high up under the roof of a tenement in a near-by alley. He knew he should start to look for another

job at once, but he could not force himself to do so that day. Instead, he stole back to the deserted museum and sat down on a bench by the side of Napoleon. Silently he sat there all night; but he did not sleep; he was thinking, and the thought that kept pecking at his brain was to him a shocking one. At last, as day began to edge its pale way through the dusty windows of the museum, Papa Chibou stood up with the air of a man who has been through a mental struggle and has made up his mind.

"Napoleon," he said, "we have been friends for a quarter of a century and now we are to be separated because a stranger had four francs more than I had. That may be lawful, my old friend, but it is not justice. You and I, we are not going to be parted."

Paris was not yet awake when Papa Chibou stole with infinite caution into the narrow street beside the museum. Along this street toward the tenement where he had taken a room crept Papa Chibou. Sometimes he had to pause for breath, for in his arms he was carrying Napoleon.

Two policemen came to arrest Papa Chibou that very afternoon. Mogen had missed Napoleon, and he was a shrewd man. There was not the slightest doubt of Papa Chibou's guilt. There stood Napoleon in the corner of his room, gazing pensively out over the housetops. The police bundled the overwhelmed and confused Papa Chibou into the police patrol, and with him, as damning evidence, Napoleon.

In his cell in the city prison Papa Chibou sat with his spirit caved in. To him jails and judges and justice were terrible and mysterious affairs. He wondered if he would be guillotined; perhaps not, since his long life had been one of blameless conduct; but the least he could expect, he reasoned, was

a long sentence to hard labour on Devil's Island, and guillotining had certain advantages over that. Perhaps it would be better to be guillotined, he told himself, now that Napoleon was sure to be melted up.

The keeper who brought him his meal of stew was a pessimist of jocular tendencies.

"A pretty pickle," said the keeper; "and at your age too. You must be a very wicked old man to go about stealing dummies. What will be safe now? One may expect to find the Eiffel Tower missing any morning. Dummy stealing! What a career! We have had a man in here who stole a trolley car, and one who made off with the anchor of a steamship, and even one who pilfered a hippopotamus from a zoo, but never one who stole a dummy—and an old one-eared dummy, at that! It is an affair extraordinary!"

"And what did they do to the gentleman who stole the hippopotamus?" inquired Papa Chibou tremulously.

The keeper scratched his head to indicate thought.

"I think," he said, "that they boiled him alive. Either that or they transported him for life to Morocco; I don't recall exactly."

Papa Chibou's brow grew damp.

"It was a trial most comical, I can assure you," went on the keeper. "The judges were Messieurs Bertouf, Goblin, and Perouse—very amusing fellows, all three of them. They had fun with the prisoner; how I laughed. Judge Bertouf said, in sentencing him, 'We must be severe with you, pilferer of hippopotamuses. We must make of you an example. This business of hippopotamus pilfering is getting all too common in Paris.' They are witty fellows, those judges."

Papa Chibou grew a shade paler.

"The Terrible Trio?" he asked.

"The Terrible Trio," replied the keeper cheerfully.

"Will they be my judges?" asked Papa Chibou.

"Most assuredly," promised the keeper, and strolled away humming happily and rattling his big keys.

Papa Chibou knew then that there was no hope for him. Even into the Musée Pratoucy the reputation of those three judges had penetrated, and it was a sinister reputation indeed. They were three ancient, grim men who had fairly earned their title, The Terrible Trio, by the severity of their sentences; evildoers blanched at their names, and this was a matter of pride to them.

Shortly the keeper came back; he was grinning.

"You have the devil's own luck, old-timer," he said to Papa Chibou. "First you have to be tried by The Terrible Trio, and then you get assigned to you as lawyer none other than Monsieur Georges Dufayel."

"And this Monsieur Dufayel, is he then not a good lawyer?" questioned Papa Chibou miserably.

The keeper snickered.

"He has not won a case for months," he answered, as if it were the most amusing thing imaginable. "It is really better than a circus to hear him muddling up his clients' affairs in court. His mind is not on the case at all. Heaven knows where it is. When he rises to plead before the judges he has no fire, no passion. He mumbles and stutters. It is a saying about the courts that one is as good as convicted who has the ill luck to draw Monsieur Georges Dufayel as his advocate. Still, if one is too poor to pay for

a lawyer, one must take what he can get. That's philosophy, eh, old-timer?"

Papa Chibou groaned.

"Oh, wait till to-morrow," said the keeper gayly. "Then you'll have a real reason to groan."

"But surely I can see this Monsieur Dufayel."

"Oh, what's the use? You stole the dummy, didn't you? It will be there in court to appear against you. How entertaining! Witness for the prosecution: Monsieur Napoleon. You are plainly as guilty as Cain, old-timer, and the judges will boil your cabbage for you very quickly and neatly, I can promise you that. Well, see you to-morrow. Sleep well."

Papa Chibou did not sleep well. He did not sleep at all, in fact, and when they marched him into the inclosure where sat the other nondescript offenders against the law he was shaken and utterly wretched. He was overawed by the great court room and the thick atmosphere of seriousness that hung over it.

He did pluck up enough courage to ask a guard, "Where is my lawyer, Monsieur Dufayel?"

"Oh, he's late, as usual," replied the guard. And then, for he was a waggish fellow, he added, "If you're lucky he won't come at all."

Papa Chibou sank down on the prisoners' bench and raised his eyes to the tribunal opposite. His very marrow was chilled by the sight of The Terrible Trio. The chief judge, Bertouf, was a vast puff of a man, who swelled out of his judicial chair like a poisonous fungus. His black robe was familiar with spilled brandy, and his dirty judicial bib was askew. His face was bibulous and brutal, and he had the wattles of a turkey gobbler. Judge Goblin, on his right, looked to have mummified; he was

at least a hundred years old and had wrinkled parchment skin and red-rimmed eyes that glittered like the eyes of a cobra. Judge Perouse was one vast jungle of tangled grizzled whisker, from the midst of which projected a cockatoo's beak of a nose; he looked at Papa Chibou and licked his lips with a long pink tongue. Papa Chibou all but fainted; he felt no bigger than a pea, and less important; as for his judges, they seemed enormous monsters.

The first case was called, a young swaggering fellow who had stolen an orange from a pushcart.

"Ah, Monsieur Thief," rumbled Judge Bertouf with a scowl, "you are jaunty now. Will you be so jaunty a year from to-day when you are released from prison? I rather think not. Next case."

Papa Chibou's heart pumped with difficulty. A year for an orange—and he had stolen a man! His eyes roved round the room and he saw two guards carrying in something which they stood before the judges. It was Napoleon.

A guard tapped Papa Chibou on the shoulder. "You're next," he said.

"But my lawyer, Monsieur Dufayel——" began Papa Chibou.

"You're in hard luck," said the guard, "for here he comes."

Papa Chibou in a daze found himself in the prisoner's dock. He saw coming toward him a pale young man. Papa Chibou recognized him at once. It was the slender, erect young man of the museum. He was not very erect now; he was listless. He did not recognize Papa Chibou; he barely glanced at him.

"You stole something," said the young lawyer, and his voice was toneless. "The stolen goods were

found in your room. I think we might better plead guilty and get it over with."

"Yes, monsieur," said Papa Chibou, for he had let go all his hold on hope. "But attend a moment. I have something—a message for you."

Papa Chibou fumbled through his pockets and at last found the card of the American girl with the bright dark eyes. He handed it to Georges Dufayel.

"She left it with me to give to you," said Papa Chibou. "I was chief watchman at the Musée Pratoency, you know. She came there night after night, to wait for you."

The young man gripped the sides of the card with both hands; his face, his eyes, everything about him seemed suddenly charged with new life.

"Ten thousand million devils," he cried. "And I doubted her! I owe you much, monsieur. I owe you everything." He wrung Papa Chibou's hand.

Judge Bertouf gave an impatient judicial grunt.

"We are ready to hear your case, Advocate Dufayel," said the judge, "if you have one."

The court attendants sniggered.

"A little moment, monsieur the judge," said the lawyer. He turned to Papa Chibou. "Quick," he shot out, "tell me about the crime you are charged with. What did you steal?"

"Him," replied Papa Chibou, pointing.

"That dummy of Napoleon?"

Papa Chibou nodded.

"But why?"

Papa Chibou shrugged his shoulders.

"Monsieur could not understand."

"But you must tell me!" said the lawyer urgently. "I must make a plea for you. These savages will be severe enough, in any event; but I may be able to

do something. Quick; why did you steal this Napoleon?"

"I was his friend," said Papa Chibou. "The museum failed. They were going to sell Napoleon for junk, Monsieur Dufayel. He was my friend. I could not desert him."

The eyes of the young advocate had caught fire; they were lit with a flash. He brought his fist down on the table.

"Enough!" he cried.

Then he rose in his place and addressed the court. His voice was low, vibrant and passionate; the judges, in spite of themselves, leaned forward to listen to him.

"May it please the honourable judges of this court of France," he began, "my client is guilty. Yes, I repeat in a voice of thunder, for all France to hear, for the enemies of France to hear, for the whole wide world to hear, he is guilty. He did steal this figure of Napoleon, the lawful property of another. I do not deny it. This old man, Jerome Chibou, is guilty, and I for one am proud of his guilt."

Judge Bertouf grunted.

"If your client is guilty, Advocate Dufayel," he said, "that settles it. Despite your pride in his guilt, which is a peculiar notion, I confess, I am going to sentence him to——"

"But wait, your honour!" Dufayel's voice was compelling. "You must, you shall hear me! Before you pass sentence on this old man, let me ask you a question."

"Well?"

"Are you a Frenchman, Judge Bertouf?"

"But certainly."

"And you love France?"

"Monsieur has not the effrontery to suggest otherwise?"

"No. I was sure of it. That is why you will listen to me."

"I listen."

"I repeat then: Jerome Chibou is guilty. In the law's eyes he is a criminal. But in the eyes of France and those who love her his guilt is a glorious guilt; his guilt is more honourable than innocence itself."

The three judges looked at one another blankly; Papa Chibou regarded his lawyer with wide eyes; Georges Dufayel spoke on.

"These are times of turmoil and change in our country, messieurs the judges. Proud traditions which were once the birthright of every Frenchman have been allowed to decay. Enemies beset us within and without. Youth grows careless of that honour which is the soul of a nation. Youth forgets the priceless heritages of the ages, the great names that once brought glory to France in the past, when Frenchmen were Frenchmen. There are some in France who may have forgotten the respect due a nation's great"—here Advocate Dufayel looked very hard at the judges—"but there are a few patriots left who have not forgotten. And there sits one of them.

"This poor old man has deep within him a glowing devotion to France. You may say that he is a simple, unlettered peasant. You may say that he is a thief. But I say, and true Frenchmen will say with me, that he is a patriot, messieurs the judges. He loves Napoleon. He loves him for what he did for France. He loves him because in Napoleon burned that spirit which has made France great.

There was a time, messieurs the judges, when your fathers and mine dared share that love for a great leader. Need I remind you of the career of Napoleon? I know I need not. Need I tell you of his victories? I know I need not."

Nevertheless, Advocate Dufayel did tell them of the career of Napoleon. With a wealth of detail and many gestures he traced the rise of Napoleon; he lingered over his battles; for an hour and ten minutes he spoke eloquently of Napoleon and his part in the history of France.

"You may have forgotten," he concluded, "and others may have forgotten, but this old man sitting here a prisoner—he did not forget. When mercenary scoundrels wanted to throw on the junk heap this effigy of one of France's greatest sons, who was it that saved him? Was it you, messieurs the judges? Was it I? Alas, no. It was a poor old man who loved Napoleon more than he loved himself. Consider, messieurs the judges; they were going to throw on the junk heap Napoleon—France's Napoleon—our Napoleon. Who would save him? Then up rose this man, this Jerome Chibou, whom you would brand as a thief, and he cried aloud for France and for the whole world to hear, 'Stop! Desecraters of Napoleon, stop! There still lives one Frenchman who loves the memories of his native land; there is still one patriot left. I, I, Jerome Chibou, will save Napoleon!' And he did save him, messieurs the judges."

Advocate Dufayel mopped his brow, and leveling an accusing finger at The Terrible Trio he said, "You may send Jerome Chibou to jail. But when you do, remember this: You are sending to jail the spirit of France. You may find Jerome Chibou

guilty. But when you do, remember this: You are condemning a man for love of country, for love of France. Wherever true hearts beat in French bosoms, messieurs the judges, there will the crime of Jerome Chibou be understood, and there will the name of Jerome Chibou be honoured. Put him in prison, messieurs the judges. Load his poor feeble old body with chains. And a nation will tear down the prison walls, break his chains, and pay homage to the man who loved Napoleon and France so much that he was willing to sacrifice himself on the altar of patriotism."

Advocate Dufayel sat down; Papa Chibou raised his eyes to the judges' bench. Judge Perouse was ostentatiously blowing his beak of a nose. Judge Goblin, who wore a Sedan ribbon in his buttonhole, was sniffing into his inkwell. And Chief Judge Bertouf was openly blubbering.

"Jerome Chibou, stand up." It was Chief Judge Bertouf who spoke, and his voice was thick with emotion.

Papa Chibou, quaking, stood up. A hand like a hand of pink bananas was thrust down at him.

"Jerome Chibou," said Chief Judge Bertouf, "I find you guilty. Your crime is patriotism in the first degree. I sentence you to freedom. Let me have the honour of shaking the hand of a true Frenchman."

"And I," said Judge Goblin, thrusting out a hand as dry as autumn leaves.

"And I also," said Judge Perouse, reaching out a hairy hand.

"And, furthermore," said Chief Judge Bertouf, "you shall continue to protect the Napoleon you saved. I subscribe a hundred francs to buy him for you."

"And I," said Judge Goblin.

"And I also," said Judge Perouse.

As they left the court room, Advocate Dufayel, Papa Chibou and Napoleon, Papa Chibou turned to his lawyer.

"I can never repay monsieur," he began.

"Nonsense!" said the lawyer.

"And would Monsieur Dufayel mind telling me again the last name of Napoleon?"

"Why, Bonaparte, of course. Surely you knew——"

"Alas, no, Monsieur Dufayel. I am a man the most ignorant. I did not know that my friend had done such great things."

"You didn't? Then what in the name of heaven did you think Napoleon was?"

"A sort of murderer," said Papa Chibou humbly.

Out beyond the walls of Paris in a garden stands the villa of Georges Dufayel, who has become, everyone says, the most eloquent and successful young lawyer in the Paris courts. He lives there with his wife, who has bright dark eyes. To get to his house one must pass a tiny gatehouse, where lives a small old man with a prodigious walrus moustache. Visitors who peer into the gatehouse as they pass sometimes get a shock, for standing in one corner of its only room they see another small man, in uniform and a big hat. He never moves, but stands there by the window all day, one hand in the bosom of his coat, the other at his side, while his eyes look out over the garden. He is waiting for Papa Chibou to come home after his work among the asparagus beds to tell him the jokes and the news of the day.

QUESTIONS

1. What was the Musée Pratoucy?
2. Describe Papa Chibou.
3. Why did he come to Paris?
4. What does Papa Chibou mean by saying that every night he walked with adventure?
5. Describe the statue of Napoleon to which Papa Chibou was so devoted.
6. What were the reasons for this devotion?
7. Why was Papa Chibou so interested in the success of the love affair between the young couple at the Musée?
8. For what reason does M. Pratoucy find it necessary to close the Musée?
9. Describe Papa Chibou's emotion as the auction progresses.
10. What is the reason that M. Georges Dufayel has won no cases for many months?
11. How do you account for the young lawyer's sudden change of attitude?
12. On what does M. Dufayel rest his plea for his client?
13. What natural mistake has the lawyer made regarding the affection of Papa Chibou for Napoleon?
14. Does the ending seem satisfactory? Why?
15. Did you enjoy this story?
16. Why does Papa Chibou have nothing to say as to who shall be his lawyer?
17. Point out some expressions which the author uses to obtain a French atmosphere.
18. Find some clever humorous expressions. Are they well used?
19. Explain the use in the story of the following words: gnome, relegated, perfunctory, toga, pessimist, nondescript, effrontery, prodigious, papier-mâché.
20. Where do you think Mr. Connell got his idea and information for this story?
21. Have you ever heard of any other famous wax-works? Have you seen any?
22. Find out what the Catacombs are and be prepared to tell the class.

A USE FOR CLODS

BY

BEN AMES WILLIAMS

BEN AMES WILLIAMS

(1889—)

Ben Ames Williams is the author of hundreds of short stories, dealing mostly with the lives and experiences of the people of northern New England. Primarily, he is a story-teller; it is the plot that is of first importance. In his stories we find most unusual experiences arising from commonplace situations.

Mr. Williams was born in Macon, Mississippi, in 1889, but his early life was spent in Jackson, Ohio, where his father was the editor of a country weekly. It was with many interruptions and difficulties that the young man prepared for college. At the age of fifteen he came East to attend preparatory school, but almost immediately after his enrollment there, his father was made consul in Wales, and the family moved to Great Britain. A tutor now helped the boy with his Latin, until he could read it for pleasure, and in his other subjects he prepared himself.

In 1906 he entered Dartmouth College, and four years later was graduated. English was his major subject. Following his graduation, he took a position as reporter for the *Boston American*. His ambition was to write stories; and in the next four years he wrote eighty-five short stories before one was accepted.

In 1916, the editor of *Munsey's Magazine* encouraged him to give up newspaper work and settle down to the life of an author. With his wife and two sons he went to Newtonville, Mass., to make his home; his summers are spent at a camp in Maine.

Among the books and short stories written by Ben Ames Williams are many that will be of interest. "They Grind Exceeding Small," "As a Man Speaketh," "Ancient Apparition," "Good Girl," are the titles of some of his best short stories. "Thrifty Stock" is a collection that will appeal.

A USE FOR CLODS

Young Carl Van Wert had never before been north of Boston, and he felt like a pioneer. He had gone to sleep the night before on the Pullman, from

whose windows he had been able to look forth across a familiar countryside. This morning he saw bold and barren hills, brown fields, leafless trees close reefed for winter's gales, and everywhere the warmth and color of spruce and fir and hemlock and of pine. There was, about the towns where the train stopped, an air of impermanency. The houses were of frame construction, narrow and high; they seemed flimsy. He thought a stiff wind would have toppled many of them. As a matter of fact, a stiff wind was blowing that morning; dry leaves scurried in panic before it, for it came from the north and there was ice in its breath; but young Carl Van Wert, in the warm Pullman, had no hint of this.

He began to see, on the platforms along the way, men garbed for winter in kersey pants and felt boots and heavy, sheep-lined coats. They repelled him, for they did not look scrupulously clean, and he had been taught from babyhood to brush his teeth twice or thrice a day, bathe at least once a day and tend his nails. These matters had been insisted on so strenuously that they had assumed in his eyes more importance than they deserved. So he did not like these soiled-looking men; but they interested him, and he wondered if there were any here aboard the train, and decided to inspect the day coaches and see.

The coaches offended his nostrils, and on the platform between the last of them and the smoking car, he stopped to light a cigarette; then opened the door of the smoker and was immediately grateful for the precaution. The car, to his first glance, seemed full of men; enormous men with wide shoulders and broad faces and mustaches and greasy hair. The air was foul with the smoke from their foul pipes; the floor was littered and stained so that he could find no

clean place to set his foot; and the odor of many hot and steaming human bodies, each swathed in garments too long worn, struck him like a shock of horrible and nauseating fear. One or two of the men saw him and grinned good-naturedly; and then the brakeman came across the swaying platform at his back and stood beside him in the open door. Van Wert welcomed this brakeman as an ally.

"Who are they?" he asked.

"Crew going into the woods," the brakeman replied.

"Lumberjacks?"

Van Wert had seen the word in a book. The brakeman grinned faintly, but he nodded.

"Yeah."

The young man, with no further parley, fled back to his Pullman. The experience had been a shock to him; he weighed it in his thoughts and was faintly appalled. For he, too, was going into the woods. At Princeton he had decided on the forestry school.

His father weighed the idea, asked acutely, "Sure you want that kind of life, son?" His son was sure. "Then I'll tell you," said old Van Wert. "I'll fix it up for you to go into the woods for two-three months—see how things are done on the ground. It'll do you good physically, and you'll learn something; and you'll know whether you want to go on."

It had been so arranged. When this train should presently stop—he looked at his watch and saw that it would be less than ten minutes now—he would be at the jumping-off place. There remained ahead of him a long automobile ride, a motor-boat trip, probably some tramping before he should reach his destination far up in the spruce forests. He had expected to enjoy himself, but the sight of his poten-

tial fellow workers in the smoking car ahead disturbed him.

"They say even a pig, given a chance, will keep himself clean," he thought disgustedly. "They're lower than swine; they're clods."

Remembrance of them made him go into the lavatory and wash his hands. Then the engine whistled, the train began to hiccup on its brakes, and he knew it was time to get off. The porter helped him on with his coat, bore away his bags. There was also a steamer trunk in the baggage car ahead; but, by the time he had alighted, that end of the platform was thronged with the men from the smoker, so he made no attempt to claim the trunk until they should have disappeared.

Their voices came to him—hoarse, shouting yet strangely musical voices. A young man in corduroy knickerbockers and a plaid Mackinaw had met them, was checking their names, shouting at them, grinning in response to their jests, answering their loud calls. As they answered to their names they climbed into large-bodied motor trucks that would transport them on the first long stage of their journey into the wilderness. Van Wert watched from a vantage at the other end of the platform, and, when the last of the trucks was loaded and had lumbered away, he was not surprised that the young man in corduroys turned in his direction.

This young man looked at him for a moment, then said pleasantly, "You're Van Wert, aren't you?"

"Yes," Van Wert nodded. "Did you come to meet me?"

The other held out his hand.

"Jenks is my name. I came down to get that bunch headed in the right direction, and the boss told

me to bring you back. I've got a flivver around behind the station. Hope you didn't mind waiting?"

"You had my sympathy." Van Wert smiled. He meant to be friendly, but Jenks seemed surprised.

"Sympathy? How's that?"

"Oh, having to handle swine like that!"

Jenks chuckled a little.

"They're not so bad. You ought to see some of the stuff we get up here. Those were good men. I know 'em. They were up here all last winter."

"A good half of them had drunk more than was good for them," Van Wert suggested.

"Half?" Jenks laughed. "Lord, all of them!" He was inspecting the trunk to which Van Wert had led him. "That yours?"

"Yes—if you can manage."

"Oh, transportation's the best thing we do up here. I can take your stuff right on the flivver. There's no one going up with us. Trunk on the running board and the other stuff in the back." He turned away. "I'll back her in here to the platform."

Ten minutes later Van Wert's luggage was bestowed as Jenks had promised. The train meanwhile had pulled ahead into the yards. As Jenks tied the last knot in the rope that held the trunk, a brakeman came out on the rear platform of his train and yelled to him.

When Jenks answered, the brakeman shouted, "One of your gang's soused in the smoker here."

Jenks smiled a little and strode that way. Van Wert hesitated, decided to wait where he was. By and by Jenks and the brakeman appeared, dragging between them a small, soiled and abhorrent figure. The man's head sagged and swayed weakly from side to side. His stumbling feet dragged along the cin-

ders. They brought him down the track and stuffed him bodily into the tonneau of the car.

Van Wert had moved to one side, out of the way, but at this he asked, "Why do you put him in there?"

"He was asleep on the floor between two seats," Jenks explained. "The others probably thought it was a joke to leave him. I'll take him up with us."

Van Wert said slowly and painfully, "But he's so damned foul, you know."

Jenks looked at him with quick surprise, then looked away.

"Well, it's my job to get him in, anyway. He ought to have gone in the trucks, but they're on their way now."

"I shouldn't think carrion like that was worth carting in," Van Wert suggested, and Jenks smiled that ready smile of his.

"He's a good hand with an ax," he replied. "And he can drive a team and he's a first-rate mechanic." Van Wert must have seemed incredulous. "Oh, I know he doesn't look it," Jenks agreed. "But he's a good man."

Their little car rattled through the town and began the long climb beyond. The great lake spread to their left and ahead, and toward the crest of the hill Jenks stopped so that Van Wert might see its splendor. The strong northerly wind was whipping the water into whitecaps, between which lay deepest blue; the mountains behind them and up the lake ahead were as blue as the water, beneath a sky that was covered with scudding, shadowing clouds. There was a somber note in this blue that predominated everywhere, and the two young men buttoned their coats more snugly.

"Cold," Van Wert said. "That's gorgeous all right, but it's cold as the devil in this wind."

Jenks, starting the car, nodded.

"Wind holds that way, we'll be frozen up pretty quick. There was ice in the coves this morning."

They dropped down toward the lake again, along that marvelous road built for forty-odd miles through thick woods by the great company which Van Wert had come to serve. Jenks told the story of the road.

"It's pretty good now, but I can remember when it took six horses to pull a buckboard through here," he said, and Van Wert wondered audibly. The man in the tonneau slept, with loud snores.

They stopped for a moment at Pickerel Bay while Jenks went into the store there; stopped again at Rough River, a dozen miles farther on, where heavily clad men seated idly along the veranda rail before the store watched them from narrow eyes. These expressionless eyes disturbed Van Wert. The men were unshaven and unclean.

When Jenks came out and they drove on toward the Plant Farm, Van Wert asked, "All the workmen up here as dirty as the specimens I've seen?"

Jenks looked at him sidewise and chuckled.

"Why, they're not really lily-white lads, you know." He saw the other's movement of repulsion and dropped a hand lightly on his companion's knee. "You'll get used to it, son," he said paternally, though he was scarce as old as Van Wert. "You can't go much on looks up here. I've seen some pretty seedy-looking bums turn out a good day's work." He jerked his head backward. "That man in the back seat there—he's a Polack, or something, with a hell of a name. We call him Tom Jack. He was in the Austrian Army for a while; but he deserted first chance he got and came over here some-

how and tried to get in with our bunch when we took hold; but they wouldn't take a chance on him. Tom's a good man; can sing like the devil and work like two devils. But I don't suppose he'll take a good bath from now till spring."

"He ought to be made to," Van Wert said hotly. "These—they're not men. They're children. They can't think for themselves. You have to tell them what to do, and dry-nurse them to keep them from getting sick, and keep them amused and see they don't stumble over their own feet. They're not half so intelligent as a good machine." He looked at Tom Jack, snoring peacefully behind them. "He's a clod!" he said, and liked the word. "A clod!"

Jenks was not by nature argumentative. He pointed ahead to where a flock of partridges fed in the road, moving slowly to one side to let the car go by, like rather tame chickens. A little farther on they jumped four deer, and the creatures bounded through the forest beside them, slanting away on a tangent, for a hundred yards before they disappeared. By and by a turn in the road brought Katahdin into view ahead of them, and Jenks pointed.

"There's some little hill," he commented.

Van Wert, by the stark beauty of that uncouth and rugged pile, was silenced and made breathless; little more was said, and so presently they reached Plant Farm.

Toward midafternoon, when the early dusk of a cloudy day was already upon them, Van Wert began the next stage of his journey. The manner of it was none of his choosing; he found himself in the hands of destiny in the shape of Matt Riley, who was in charge at the Farm. He was to go by motor boat up Summacook Lake, a thirty-mile trip; and with

him would go that crew of men who had been his traveling companions on the train and whom he and Jenks had passed, in the lumbering motor trucks, on the way to the Farm. Tom Jack, awakened from his slumber, had rejoined his companions. The motor trucks would bear them on to the foot of the lake; Jenks drove Van Wert over and turned him over to Chiswick, who had the engine of the boat in charge.

Van Wert looked out across the tumbling waters of Summacook with some misgivings. The wind was blowing cold and ever colder; he was glad he had found an opportunity to change into rough and warmer clothing. He could see ice along the shore in both directions, and thick ice in the coves and a scum of ice out toward the open water.

"You won't be able to run this boat much longer," he told Chiswick, and the engineer nodded.

"Breaking ice now all the time," he grumbled. "They keep us moving back and forth up the lake so fast she don't have time to freeze. This rotten engine'll lay down on me some night and we'll freeze in out there."

Van Wert gave only a casual inspection to the craft that was to take him on the next stage of the journey. He saw that she had a cabin forward into which a dozen men might crowd, and a smaller cabin aft that sheltered the engine. In her broad waist there was space for carrying stores, and this was already heaped with miscellaneous stuff jumbled in apparent disorder. When the crew of men presently tumbled aboard, each throwing his pack down wherever was easiest, the boat seemed to settle lumberingly in the water under the load. Van Wert had given some thought to the question of where he

should settle himself. He surrendered the forward cabin, where a score of men had packed into space fit for little more than half that number. He meant to stay with Chiswick, preferring the fumes of gasoline, which hung heavy over the craft and especially heavy in the engine cabin, to the reek of the human bodies. When the men were all aboard, they got under way without ceremony.

Jenks, from the wharf, called, "Good luck, old man," to Van Wert.

The engine, cranked painfully by hand with a long iron lever, barked and caught, and the broad-beamed craft turned its nose through the slush ice toward midlake. It was about three o'clock in the afternoon.

"How long shall we be on the way?" Van Wert asked Chiswick, and the engineer said, "Ought to make it by eight o'clock, unless something happens."

Van Wert smiled a little at the pessimistic tone which seemed habitual to the other.

"What's likely to happen?" he asked.

"This rotten scow—you never know," said Chiswick gloomily. "She's a child of misfortune. Nothing ever surprises me."

Bursts of laughter came to them now and then from the men in the cabin forward or under its lee in the waist. Van Wert stepped out to fill his lungs with fresh air and the cold wind whipped him stinging. The sky, he saw, was covered with clouds now.

"Snow?" he shouted in to Chiswick. and the other nodded sulkily.

"Yes!" he assented.

Tom Jack, the only man in the gang forward who was an individual in Van Wert's eyes, crawled

aft and went in to see Chiswick. Van Wert, outside, listened curiously. The Pole spoke, he discovered, fair English—understandable enough. This surprised him; he had expected a twisted, foreign tongue.

"How she hitting?" Tom Jack demanded, grinning good-naturedly at Chiswick and pointing to the engine.

"Now and then," Chiswick told him.

Tom Jack nodded in cheerful understanding.

"Same ol' goat, she is," he agreed. "She soun' lak hell."

"Why, say," cried Chiswick, warming to the subject, "she can think of more things to do that she oughtn't—it's wonderful!"

Tom Jack clapped him on the shoulder.

"Tha's right," he applauded. "You tell 'em. Well, you all right this trip. Tom Jack fix her if she go bust any."

Chiswick actually grinned.

"Sure!" he agreed.

Shouts arose from the men forward, and Van Wert saw they were looking at him; but he could understand no word. Then Tom Jack climbed out of the engine cabin and yelled at them in jumbled syllables, bending to explain to Chiswick.

"I'm go'n' sing them little song," he explained. "These boys crying for me."

He winked elaborately, grinned at Van Wert and climbed along the rail beside the cabin. Van Wert heard his voice uplifted, sweet and clear and rich of tone. The words were meaningless, the melody strangely disturbing. Van Wert found himself responding to the charm of that voice, shivering a little. Then the men burst into a great guffaw, and

he guessed that the song was ribald, and was disgusted with himself for having been affected and went below with Chiswick again.

Darkness began presently to thicken about them. Two or three of the men, grinning apologetically, sidled into seats beside the engine, by their gestures indicating how cold it was on deck. Van Wert was driven into the open, and went forward, picking his way. Overside, bits of ice slid along the side of the craft, and he could see that they were running through a channel, in some places narrow, in others almost as wide as the lake; could see that everywhere ice lined the shores. The whipping wind was dead in his face when he looked forward, but he was warmly clad and welcomed the clean sweep and scourging of it; and he climbed along the rail beside the cabin to the very bow; found there in the forward end of the main cabin a smaller compartment he had not marked before, in which a man tended the wheel.

This man slid open a window and shouted to him, "Come on inside. You'll freeze out there!"

Van Wert liked him. He had a round, freckled face, and he had a scrubbed look which Van Wert thought pleasing. There was barely room for two of them inside his cubby-hole.

"I didn't spot this place," Van Wert explained, "or I'd have been begging shelter before. These chaps aboard here are too strong for me in close quarters."

The other laughed cheerfully.

"Right you are, son," he agreed. He added, as though it were an unimportant afterthought, "Roberts is my name."

"Van Wert's mine." They shook hands.

"Going in?" Roberts asked. Van Wert nodded.

"To learn the game," he explained. "I'm green as grass."

"Nothing much to learn," Roberts said casually. A gust shook the boat. "Ain't this some night, what?" he asked.

"Surely is. Freeze up pretty soon, don't you?"

"Any day. This wind stops, it'll freeze overnight."

They fell silent, staring ahead into the darkness. Roberts turned on a searchlight set on the roof above his head, and its rays illumined the tumbling water. The shores were dimly to be seen on either hand, their distance unguessable. Dark was almost fully come. Darkness had quite come when, half an hour later, the throbbing of the engine became uncertain, reluctant, and stopped. Roberts grinned.

"There she goes again," he said casually. "I'll bet Chiswick is swearing. Well, time for a pipe."

He lighted it. Secure from the wind as they were, Van Wert began to feel cold, for there was no heat in the cabin. Roberts's pipe glowed.

By and by he asked, "You know how to steer?"

Van Wert nodded.

"I'm going back—see if I can help," Roberts explained. "You stick around here and keep her headed right when we get under way. Chiswick don't understand the temperament of this engine."

The other assented and climbed out on the bow of the boat to let Roberts pass. Roberts went astern. The workmen in the main cabin raised a shouting chorus of song. Van Wert saw a dozen men clustered about the engine cabin, through whom Roberts pushed his way; heard the voice of the man Tom Jack as he climbed out on deck. Tom Jack shouted something in his native tongue, and the other men laughed loudly.

The thing that happened came very quickly. First a man's startled oath; instantly a louder cry. Van Wert thought there was more light aft than there had been. Then a small sound like the ripping of a handkerchief swelled till it might have been the ripping of the very fabric of the heavens, and flames showed. A man tumbled, screaming, into the water overside.

There was the noise of a puff, like an exhalation from a giant's lungs, and the whole after part of the boat was disrupted in a volcano of liquid flame, roaring flame.

Van Wert's senses were perfectly clear, but his muscles would not function. He was not in the least frightened, but he was paralyzed. He could not move, could not speak, could not cry out. Yet he saw with a clarity of vision which was photographic; saw men who cried out, moving frantically and without aim to and fro; saw little Tom Jack beating tentatively at the flames with a blanket from the mass of dunnage amidships. Other men erupted from the cabin and raised their voices in a babel of tongues. Every one moved with extraordinary and fruitless speed; the voices were unnaturally loud, with an undertone like a shriek.

He saw Tom Jack again, withdrawn from the mass, busy with some peculiar task. The little man had stepped to one side, out of the tumult, and had taken off his cap. From the pocket of his coat he took something which Van Wert could not see, and put it in his cap and jammed the cap tightly on his head. Then he looked off into the darkness toward the shores on either side. Still Van Wert stood paralyzed. He was not yet afraid; but he found himself immensely interested in the movements of Tom Jack.

The flames were moving forward very swiftly, pressing the men back till Van Wert found himself in the center of a thick pack of them. One man was crowded off and fell into the water, and bobbed there, screaming and clutching at the sides of the boat for a while, and then Van Wert did not hear him any more. He perceived that the stern of the boat was lower in the water, and thought with dull interest:

"Hello! We're sinking! How are we going to get ashore?"

Then Tom Jack began to shout; and his voice was not, as the others had been, unnaturally loud. It was merely firm and clear. When no one paid any heed to his shouting, he began to sing; and that was so strange that every one hushed to listen. Then Tom Jack ceased singing and spoke to them quickly, half in English, half in his own tongue; and Van Wert saw that he was pointing toward the right-hand shore. When he was done speaking, a clamor of protest and outcry arose. The great light of the flames illumined them all. The men surged and twisted in a mass, and through this mass Tom Jack picked his way to where Van Wert stood. To Van Wert he said cheerfully:

"We better take a swim now. No boat. She's go'n' go away from here." He pointed downward, grinning amiably. "Not far over there," he added, gesturing toward the shore. "You better come along."

Van Wert's lips moved stiffly.

He replied, "All right!"

Tom Jack nodded.

"Tha's good," he assented. "All right! Le's go!"

He turned in a matter-of-fact way and sat down

on the edge of the deck at Van Wert's feet, and turned around so that he could lower himself into the water. Van Wert had seen him kick off the rubber overshoes which he wore outside his felt boots, and Van Wert took his knife and slit his own laces and tossed his boots away. Tom Jack was in the water, moving toward shore, and two or three men had followed him. He turned to shout back some laughing remark, and a dozen men laughed with him and jumped into the water. Van Wert discarded his coat; then he slid gingerly over the side. It was as though a sharp knife cut him where the water touched his flesh. He shivered, was instantly too cold to shiver, and began to swim, welcoming the exertion. The water about him was dotted with the heads of men. Other men on the boat behind screamed and ran to and fro in desperate indecision.

The swimming men came presently to ice; thin ice that would not bear their weight. They broke it away in front of them, leaning on it to rest a little when their exertions were more than they could bear. Van Wert heard something roar behind them, and looked back into a great glare of light, which vanished to leave only blackness and the sound of anguished cries, which lessened and ceased. Then Tom Jack's voice from ahead shouted encouragingly, and he forgot the lost boat and pushed forward, thrashing at the thin ice angrily. A man at his shoulders strangled and clutched at him and sank while Van Wert instinctively shuddered away.

He was a strong swimmer, and the men ahead of him were breaking the ice, so that he had little to do. When they were wearied and fell to one side, he passed them, and so by and by found himself shoulder to shoulder with Tom Jack himself in the bitter water.

Tom Jack looked at him and grinned as cheerfully as ever, and said in a steady tone, "So you come along! Tha's all right too!"

Van Wert nodded stiffly, his teeth set, numb with cold and with the sense of ruthless, simple tragedy.

"It's cold," he said.

Tom Jack crushed away the ice before him, pressing shoreward.

"Col' enough to put some ice on the devil's whisker," he agreed cheerfully. "Bes' to work ver' hard and keep warm so."

The man seemed tireless. Van Wert watched him for a moment with a weary and indifferent admiration as he methodically broke the ice by bearing his weight upon it or by beating it with his fists, and thrust the floating cakes behind him and pushed on. The competitive instinct awoke in him and he began to keep pace with the other, driving himself by sheer will. His efforts were clumsy; once he splashed water on Tom Jack's head and the little man turned on him fiercely.

"Don' do that! I got matches in my cap!" he cried.

Van Wert remembered his glimpse of Tom Jack on the boat taking something from his pocket, stowing it within his cap. Even in that overwhelming moment, when his own faculties were paralyzed, Tom Jack had been able to pian ahead, to think. Van Wert's opinion of the little man was being greatly modified. He remembered his first impression with something like chagrin, and strove more mightily to keep pace with the other's tireless efforts.

One of the men splashing through the water behind them began to wail, a doleful, crooning, dirge-like sound. Tom Jack paused long enough to fling

a word over his shoulder. A harsh, challenging word, if tone meant anything. His voice cracked like a whip; then became melting and humorous, chuckles running through it. And from the floundering, freezing men in the bitter water low and choking laughter answered his. Tom Jack was content, flung himself against the ice again.

The long ordeal of that passage toward the shore seemed to Van Wert an eternity of torture. The cold was pain beyond belief. At first the bitter water had burned his skin, had seemed to cut and scour at him. Then it struck in; his feet and hands began to ache; this blinding ache extended up his legs and his arms. Yet the water was warmer than the air. When he lifted his shoulders to break down obstructing ice, the wind cut him to the bone, so that he was almost glad to shelter himself in the freezing water again. His hands no longer seemed to belong to him. His legs had ceased to function. He did not swim; rather pulled himself flounderingly along by pawing at the inert and maddeningly stubborn ice.

It seemed to him that it became harder and harder to break a shoreward way. He thought his strength was failing, and a vast surrender embraced his spirit and seemed to offer it peace and rest.

But Tom Jack slapped him stingingly on the cheek and cried, "Come on, bo! She'll hol' us up now pretty soon!"

And he saw that the ice was, indeed, thicker here; they were come into a cove somewhat sheltered from the full sweep of the wind by a point off to the northward. The water, less disturbed, had had more time to freeze. He could hear the men struggling behind them. They had begun to call out to Tom Jack; and Tom Jack answered, heartening and encouraging the weaker ones.

He was able to estimate afterwards that they had been a full half hour in that icy water before the end came. It came suddenly. He perceived that Tom Jack, on hands and knees, was out on the ice and that it bore his weight.

Then the little man shouted something over his shoulder, added to Van Wert in English, "I'm go'n' make some fire. You come along quick," and began to crawl swiftly toward the shore, his weight distributed upon the ice.

Van Wert himself was heavier; the crust still broke with him; but presently another man scuttled away toward the shore from a point at one side; then another; and then he found the ice would no longer break beneath him, and he dragged himself forward across the crumbling edges and lay on his stomach, breathing gaspingly, till the scourge of the wind woke new agonies in his tormented body and flogged him toward where a fire, gloriously beautiful to his ice-rimmed eyes, was already leaping upward among the trees.

Followed an interval when his senses reeled drunkenly; when he was conscious of a great heat and a great cold, like two monsters fighting for this body of his; when his garments steamed and scorched above his aching flesh. Seventeen of them, there were, about that fire. There had been many more aboard the motor boat when she started up Summacook. Chiswick and Roberts had been in the engine cabin; the others were gone in nameless, solitary ways with none to see.

By and by came shouts from the lake, and lights, men running across the ice with warm clothing and whiskey and hot things to drink; and Van Wert lost touch with what went on about him; was glad to let his soul slide into a warm oblivion.

It was three weeks before he saw Tom Jack again, for while the little man went on next morning to his appointed place in the woods, Van Wert was abed, given a rough tenderness and care, lost in a feverish delirium. But when he was able, Van Wert sought out the other, for he had things to say.

Tom Jack saw him coming and grinned and held up his hand and called, "How-do, mister? You feel better now?"

Van Wert gripped that hand, and he said earnestly and huskily, "Tom Jack, I've come up here to apologize to you."

Tom Jack stared at him a little.

"Tha's new one on me," he said. "What is it?"

"I just want to tell you," the boy awkwardly explained, "that I think you're a man, a real man; and I'm proud to know you."

"Sure I'm a man," Tom Jack confessed, in bewilderment. "Anybody can see that, I guess."

"I couldn't, first time I saw you," Van Wert told him, warm with the pleasure of amends. "I thought you weren't worth much, just because you needed a bath."

Tom Jack stared at him; then he chuckled; then he laughed.

"Ho!" he cried uproariously. "But I was ver' drunk that day." He saw Van Wert was hurt by his laughter, and touched the boy on the arm. "Tha's all right, mister," he said soothingly. "Anybody would think so when I was like that. But I am not real dirty, you see; I wash myself when I need it every time."

"Sure you do!" Van Wert assented lamely.

Tom Jack opened his hands in an expressive gesture.

"So you see tha's not your fault," he explained.

"If you had known about my washing, it would have been all right, so we are fr'en's."

Van Wert laughed a little, and gripped the other's hand again.

"That's the main thing, anyway, Tom Jack," he agreed. "Just so we are friends."

QUESTIONS

1. To what type of boy would this story, "A Use For Clods," be apt to make the greatest appeal?
2. In what ways does Mr. Williams show a good understanding of human nature?
3. Do the characters in this story interest you as types or as individuals?
4. Point out some significant detail which at first seems unimportant but later assumes importance.
5. On a map of the New England states find the probable scene of this story.
6. What actual clue to the location is given by the author? What might be the real name of "Lake Summacook?"
7. At what point in the story does Van Wert undergo a change of feeling toward the "clods?"
8. When does it first become apparent that Tom Jack is a worthy character?
9. Where is the climax?
10. Is it or is it not expected? Why?
11. How is interest sustained after the climax?
12. Do you consider the title appropriate?
13. Find at least ten descriptive adjectives. Are they well chosen?
14. Characterize the style of writing used by this author.
15. Has any other author in this collection used a similar style?
16. Recall some act of heroism and write a theme on the subject.

BULLDOG
BY
ROGER DANIELS

ROGER DANIELS

Stories of the American Negro have, in the past few years, shown a gratifying departure from the burlesque minstrel types which directly preceded them.

Since the early writings of Joel Chandler Harris and the passing of the old Southern plantations and the faithful slave types, the Negro in fiction has been misused. Unreal, low-comedy characters have been presented in abundance, purporting to be representative of this little understood race. Such fiction greatly exceeded the work of the few good writers of Negro stories.

The past three years have brought forth an increasing number of Negro stories of outstanding literary value. Of these, "Bulldog" is representative. At variance with white men and white men's ways, "Bulldog" still has a dignity of his own, and a code which is simple and logical. His brute strength, which leads him into all of his difficulties, he willingly exerts to save the life of the man who has so often pronounced sentence upon him.

Roger Daniels, author of "Bulldog," lives in West Cornwall, Connecticut. As to biographical material, he writes: "There isn't any. 'Bulldog' is a composite from life of the Savannah Police Court and Chatham County Chain gang. I was police reporter on the *Savannah Morning News* when the material was gathered, and there are people in Savannah who say Judge Barringer is Judge Schwarz, etc., etc.

"But the story is fiction even if the manner of telling is a paraphrase of things that happened."

Others of Roger Daniels's stories are:

Blood Brothers Ain't Relations
Fierce Fighting Sioux Turned Christian
You Can't Loose a Luck Houn'
Six Songs of the Soul

BULLDOG

"Next case!" Judge Barringer was brisk. Word had come to him that the railbirds were plentiful down in the marshes of the Big Swamp and he was

going hunting. It was Monday morning, and the police-court docket was an unusually large one even for Monday morning.

Out of the group of Negroes waiting in the prisoners' pen, a group so large this morning that it overflowed on to the sunny porch beyond, edged a giant Negro in answer to the turnkey's signal. Rather, he could have been said to plough his way through, for the men and women ranged before him separated as does soft loam under the impelling blade of the ploughshare. Once free of the crowd, the man stepped forward with an easy but awkward shuffle until he stood directly in front of the judge's desk. At that moment Judge Barringer was intently scanning the docket slip and figuring how soon he would be able to get away.

The prisoner's massive head might have been chiselled with an ax from a block of black marble, and not too finely chiselled, at that. It had the sheen of black marble, and was square and formidable, that head, viewed from any angle. The jaw was square and protruding, the forehead was square and receding, the nose was broad and flat. Just now the mouth was spread wide across the shining ebony face.

"Mawnin', Jedge," the big Negro said with a sheepish grin. "Heah Ah is!"

Judge Barringer's head jerked up instantly. He was not accustomed to mawkish familiarity from his charges, nor did he fail to administer stinging rebukes, when such were attempted, in the amount of sentence given as well as in verbal reproof to any and all who might presume to take such liberties. But as he took cognizance of the figure that loomed before him, his expression changed. The frown that had furrowed his forehead did not linger. It could

not be said that he smiled, but a look of real recognition, kindly and forbearing, came into his eyes. One hardly frowns at an old acquaintance.

"Well, Bulldog," Judge Barringer said, calling the big Negro by the only name he had, "I haven't seen you for the longest time. Where have you been hiding?"

Bulldog grinned, even a broader grin than before, so that his white teeth showed in a semicircle. "Same place wheah Ah usually is, Jedge Barringer, Yo' Honour. Down on the Fahm wiv Cap'n Jim." The Farm was the chain-gang camp.

"It's too bad, Bulldog," the judge said, shaking his head; "you're big enough to keep out of trouble and mind your own business."

"Yas-suh, Jedge Barringer, tha's jes' what Ah was a-doin', mindin' mah business, an' Ah jes' gits me into trouble jes' the same. Seems lak me an' trouble sticks together lak a pair ob dice." He grinned again. The grin became infectious and Judge Barringer took it up. Even the stolid fat Sam Perks, the turnkey, grinned. Then came a general titter, to be brought to a sudden halt by the judge's staccato gavel.

Judge Barringer had suddenly remembered the railbirds and the Big Swamp. He was off for a three-day hunt, and there were several things he must attend to personally before turning over the affairs of court *pro tem.* to the clerk. With still more than half a heavy Monday docket to be heard from, there was no time for amusement this morning.

"Well, where's the witness against Bulldog? Is the Court to be kept waiting? What has he to say for himself and why isn't he here?"

The patrolman who had arrested the big Negro stepped forward.

"The witness is still in the hospital, Judge," he said. "Pretty badly done up and they don't know when he will be out. I guess the case will have to be continued until he can appear."

"Waste of time," Judge Barringer said crisply. "I know Bulldog." He turned abruptly to the big Negro. "Well, what happened this time? Tell us your side of the story."

Bulldog shuffled from one foot to the other. "It was thisaway, Jedge, Yo' Honour. The las' six months what you give me, they ain't up till to-morrow. Cap'n Jim, he startin' the big 'Geechee Canal to-morrow. Come las' Friday, Cap'n Jim, he say, 'Bulldog, yo' bin a mighty good nigger this trip. Ah'm lettin' yo' out a couple ob days ahaid ob time. Mebby you-all be back so's we kin staht wif the new 'Geechee Canal together.' Ah reckon dat Cap'n Jim be right, Jedge, Yo' Honour, cause heah Ah is!"

As Bulldog broke into another of those infectious grins, it was necessary for Judge Barringer to rap for order, although he was forced to cough to hide his own mirth. Any other morning Bulldog might have been highly amusing entertainment, but the railbirds were calling from the Big Swamp.

"So much for that," Judge Barringer said. "Tell us what happened. Why is this man in the hospital?"

"It was thisaway, Jedge, Yo' Honour," Bulldog repeated the formula: "Ah gits me home an' Ah finds that a yaller Washin'ton nigger been shinin' up to my Sally while Ah bin down on de Fahm. Yassuh, Jedge, Yo' Honour, he's shinin' when I gits home. I comes in de front do' an' he goes out de back. All Ah done, Jedge, was jes' flicked dat nigger, 'cause he don' move fas' enough."

"You just flicked him. What with?" Judge Barringer asked, as the term was a new one to him.

"Wif the back ob mah han', Jedge, thisaway." Bulldog made a snapping gesture with one hand; "jes' lak yo'd flick on a fly, Jedge. Dat's all Ah done to dat measly little nigger. He wasn't big enough to hit."

"So you just flicked him like you'd flick off a fly?" Judge Barringer questioned.

"Yas-suh, dat's all, Jedge, Yo' Honour," Bulldog answered.

"And now this man is in the hospital and they don't know when he will be able to appear. It seems to me that the last time you were here you said you had just made a pass at a man and when they got him to the hospital he was cut in ten different places." Judge Barringer leaned back with an air of resignation. "Bulldog, you're hopeless. I'm going to send you back to Captain Jim for another six months. For the general safety of the community at large, you'd better do your flicking on the new Ogeechee Canal."

"Yas-suh, Jedge, Yo' Honour," Bulldog answered.

Such a remark coming from any other prisoner would have been impertinence and would have been swiftly treated as such. But between old friends there are no impertinences. Bulldog turned away with a grin and ploughed his way through the crowd in the prisoners' pen to the bench in the rear. Two negroes got up hastily to make room for him.

The business of the court moved along swiftly. The railbirds were calling to the judge's bench from the Big Swamp. Bulldog, on the prisoners' bench, was thinking of the convict captain. He liked Captain Jim. "Ah guess he knowed Ah'd be back in time

all right," he mused to himself. "Well, Cap'n Jim, Ah'm comin'."

Later that afternoon there was a meeting between the two. "Been waitin' all mawnin' for you, Bulldog," was the convict captain's greeting. "Just you run along and get your work clothes and then you can go over and clean up my quarters."

The regular routine of the check-in was usually dispensed with in Bulldog's case, as it was to-day. Once safe in the convict camp, he caused no trouble. He did the work of seven ordinary men and had withal the stolid patience of a work horse. Only when he was at liberty was Bulldog dangerous, like a colt turned out to grass which suddenly remembers that he can kick. Captain Jim had been busy for several minutes with the other prisoners before he realized that Bulldog still stood back of him, shifting uneasily from foot to foot. He recalled that the same thing had happened on one other occasion and grinned inwardly.

He half turned. "Bulldog, you go over and tell old Henry," Cap'n Jim said, "to give you something to eat."

"Yas-suh, Cap'n Jim," Bulldog said with alacrity, his eyes brightening and his lower lip hanging expectantly at the thought of food. "Dat's what Ah was hopin' yo' was goin' to say, Cap'n Jim. Ah ain't eat since las' night." The sheepish grin spread over his face. "Seems lak Ah cain't relish de bacon and grits what dey gives up to dat city jail. Dey don't know how to feed a nigger lak yo' does, Cap'n Jim."

"So that's why you came back so soon, is it?" the convict captain said with a laugh.

"No, suh," Bulldog answered soberly, his brows knit and his lips protruding. "Ah didn' come back

fer no perticular reason, Cap'n Jim. Now Ah stops and figgers it out, Ah guess it jus' happen." His face lit up with an idea as he asked with all the wonder of a small boy, "Cap'n Jim, you-all didn' put no sign on me to make me come back?"

"If you don't get out of here quick I'll put a sign on you won't forget," the captain exploded.

"Yas-suh," Bulldog called back to him over his shoulder, being already half a dozen paces on his way.

Ten minutes later, garbed in his chain-gang work clothes, with a chain dangling from his waist, Bulldog poked his head through the open window of the cook shanty.

"Ev'nin', Uncle Henry," he said in a mellifluous tone to a gray-haired Negro in cap and apron who was ladling the contents of a huge pot set at the back of the big square stove.

Uncle Henry looked up, his face crinkled with smiles that seemed to close his eyes until they were shiny, laughing dots.

"Dat you-all, Bulldog? Sho' nuff I jes' dis minute 'cided you done dis'point Cap'n Jim an' slumped a fresh ham bone an' two pounds ob meat on it into dat soup. But, Bulldog, boy, for you I fishes it out."

"Yas-suh, Uncle Henry, Ah knowed yo' ain't goin' to see Bulldog starve. Mebbe yo' has a handful ob dem yaller sweet yams." Bulldog's mouth fairly dripped.

"Hush up dat fool talk, boy," the old cook chuckled. "Don' it do my heart good to see them what likes they vittles? Bulldog, yo' am de most satisfactoriest meal hound what I know." Uncle Henry doubled with laughter, in which Bulldog, his mouth already crammed full, joined heartily.

Uncle Henry sincerely liked Bulldog. The giant never referred to the fact that Uncle Henry was a lifer. For twenty-seven years he had been a convict-camp cook. It was as a young man that, under the influence of ten-cent white mule, he had lifted a chair against his legally married wife. In Uncle Henry's mind that dreadful event had always remained as an accident. His whole life was being freely given in atonement. When some of the younger convicts taunted him and called him the old murderer, they left a hurt that remained with Uncle Henry for weeks.

Bulldog shuffled toward the door finally with a sigh. "Ef Ah swallows another swallow, Uncle Henry, Ah busts."

"Boy, come again when yo's hungry; yo' makes me proud." The old cook chortled, looking after him.

As Bulldog turned into the lane to Captain Jim's quarters, a small whitewashed bungalow, two hounds bayed a ferocious greeting.

"Yo' Lady Belle, yo' Junie, hush yo' mouf!" Bulldog bayed back. Then he grinned and tossed the remains of the fresh ham bone over the chicken-wire inclosure. The hounds left off their racket instantly and pounced on the bone, while Bulldog leaned complacently against the inclosure and eyed them with satisfaction.

"Dem houn' dawgs go after dat bone lak it was a runaway nigger," he commented with approval. Though every other Negro on the place looked upon the bloodhounds as a possible Nemesis, such a thought had never entered Bulldog's massive head. To him they were companions, and the fact that he was allowed to feed them was proof conclusive that

he was above the ordinary regulations of the convict camp.

He turned from the hounds presently and made his way to a small outhouse, where he procured a pail, a whitewash brush and a scraper. Captain Jim liked things to look spick-and-span, and the timbers supporting the bungalow porch had acquired a reddish-brown mud colour from the recent rains. Bulldog proceeded at the first job that he knew would catch Captain Jim's eye. He knew on which side his bread was buttered.

"Wasn' it sad to see *Titanic* sinkin' down,
Wasn' it sad to see *Titanic* sinkin' down;
Husban's an' wives, little chilluns los' dey lives;
Wasn' it sad to see *Titanic* sinkin' down."

Verse after verse, in the droning singsong of the old spirituals, kept time to the whitewash brush. The underpinning of the bungalow was certainly going to catch Captain Jim's eye when he came up the lane.

Two and a half hours later Bulldog took up his accustomed place in line on the way to the mess hall. If he had recently gorged until he couldn't swallow another swallow, that was not going to interfere with his doing full justice to Uncle Henry's supper. And later, spread out at full length in the bunk room over the mess hall, he lay on his back and slept the sleep of the just. Sleeping on one's back is said to be conducive to snoring, but Bulldog was a silent sleeper. If he was primitive in his mode of living, so, too, he was primitive in his sleeping hours. Dead to the world he was, yet ready to be instantly awake.

Once upon a time a fellow convict night guard had taken the liberty to bring his stick across the soles of Bulldog's bare feet as he lay asleep. It was a com-

mon trick, and as the sleepers were chained to their flat bunks, the guard had only to step back out of harm's way, while the startled sleeper rubbed open his eyes and bellowed revenge to the accompaniment of catcalls from the other prisoners. But the unlucky guard who had attempted the prank at Bulldog's expense carried an eye that squinted forever after as a warning to all and sundry that the giant was equally dangerous, asleep or awake. It must have been that Bulldog had heard the swish of the descending stick in his sleep, for the smack of it against the soles of his feet and the whoosh of his hand striking the unwitting guard had been nearly simultaneous. So Bulldog slept the sleep of the just.

He was awake with the sun, and lay there for half an hour studying his toes, even as a small boy of five or six months studies them. When a man can do that intently for half an hour, his conscience isn't bothering him. So to breakfast presently and to take his place at the head of the squad line. They were starting the new Ogeechee Canal and Bulldog knew that Captain Jim meant him to set the pace. It was an accepted fact that a squad line with Bulldog at its head got about a week and a half of digging done in a week. It was useless to try to drive labour out of Negro chain gangs, but to lead it out of them—that was different. It explained why Captain Jim needed Bulldog. Winter was coming along and the new drainage canal must be finished before the flood rains of spring.

The beginning was to be made some three miles away from camp, and they marched out in formation, five men to a squad. The chain-gang squad of five meant two ahead, two behind, one in the middle. Each prisoner had a leg iron around his right

ankle, to which was attached the four-foot squad chain. When they were on the march the squad chains of each squad were linked together in a common ring, so that if a man attempted to bolt on the road he would have to take four of his companions with him. Even if the bolt were successful, it was poor work for five men, chained together, to beat off pursuit in the swamp. When they worked, each man carried his own chain hooked to a snaffle sewed to his tunic.

But the work line was watched over by a convict guard whose duty it was to sit on a palmetto stump all day with a sawed-off shotgun across his knees. Sometimes a prisoner escaped, but not often.

Bulldog, at the head of the line, had never tried to escape. When his time was up he had always hurried to town in high glee, but with a certain remote feeling that sooner or later he would be coming back to Cap'n Jim. Once back, he was content to work out his time. He liked to work, he gloried in the fact that he could do the work of seven.

"Ah reckon, big boy, dey hangs yo' dis time." Chinkapin, so named because of his size, was the middle prisoner in Bulldog's squad. He had spoken irrelevantly to the landscape, a dreary waste of cypress trees and cabbage palmetto extending half a dozen miles to the row of live oaks that marked the river line. No one in the squad paid any attention.

"Ah reckon, big boy, dey hangs yo' dis time!" Chinkapin repeated.

This time Bulldog half turned his head to speak, but as he did so three turkey buzzards flapped crazily out of the swamp just ahead and absorbed his attention for the moment. By the time the buzzards had settled out of sight again Bulldog had forgotten Chinkapin.

But the little convict was not to be so readily neglected. "Ah reckon, big boy, dey hangs yo' dis time," he intoned once more.

"Hangs who?" Bulldog demanded bluntly. "Chinkapin, yo' half-size nigger, shut yo' mouf befo' Ah sicks dem eye-pickin' buzzards on yo'!"

"Ah ain' kill nobody," Chinkapin answered glibly; "dem flip-flop death angels ain' lookin' fo' me."

"What yo' mean yo' ain' kill nobody? What lie yo' fixin' to tell now?" Bulldog had stopped and was facing his tormentor. "Who hangs who for what? Yo' tells de truf or Ah smacks yo' cross-eyed."

Chinkapin had an active mind. Although he had never seen him, he had heard about the squint-eyed night guard. Bulldog towered above him. In one glance Chinkapin made full appraisal. Bulldog's hand was the size of a ham. There was no going back now, for the big Negro was evidently riled. The three buzzards taking wing had been an omen. Chinkapin should have realized that before he pressed his point.

"Ah ain' lyin', Bulldog," the diminutive one countered quickly. "My gal done tol' me las' night when she brung mah clo's. Ah'm leavin' Sa'day."

"Who cares when yo' leaves, han'ful? Did Ah ax yo' when yo' leaves? Who hangs for what? Yo' answer me dat in de whole truf or I slaps you pas' an' presen' an' back again!"

Chinkapin shivered. The delay had stopped the whole squad line, and back along the line a convict guard was shouting. But Bulldog was intent only on the little Negro before him.

"Does yo' answer me, Chinkapin, or does I knock you loose?" One hand, open palmed, was raised threateningly.

"Dat Washin'ton nigger died," Chinkapin blurted out in shaking fear. "My gal tol' me when she come las' night."

Bulldog's hand dropped to his side. He stood absolutely motionless, looking blankly at the quivering messenger of bad news. For a full minute he stood there, and to Chinkapin it seemed that death itself was standing there.

"Is yo' tellin' de whole truf?" Bulldog demanded.

"So help me!" quavered the terror-stricken Chinkapin.

"If yo' ain'——"

But the sentence was never finished. One of the guards, alarmed at the sudden halt, had fired into the air as a signal to the others. The report of the gun had an electrical effect on Bulldog. If the Washington Negro had died, he would hang. The three turkey buzzards, frightened by the gun, came winging past. Out of the corner of one eye Bulldog saw them.

"Stan's yo' back!" he commanded quickly, at the same time shoving the four other members of the squad into a huddle. That gave him about six feet of chain to work on. Swiftly he bent. The chain was coiled like magic first around one forearm and then the other. There was a grunt, the ring of metal, and the chain had parted. Bulldog dived headlong off the trail into the palmetto scrub just as the first convict guard came running up. He fired both barrels of the sawed-off shotgun point-blank in the general direction of Bulldog's dive. Then he reloaded and fired again, keeping up the process until the other guards arrived. In a circle they closed in on the place. But the turned-back palmetto scrub revealed nothing. Bulldog was gone.

It was Chinkapin who turned an almost pasty gray face toward heaven as he exclaimed, "May de Lawd have mercy on dis pore little nigger's soul, Ah didn' mean no hahm!"

When he dived, Bulldog landed in the lush swamp grass and proceeded through it bellywise like a snake. He made a hundred yards that way before he got to his feet and broke into a run. The palmetto scrub was slightly higher than his head as he pressed forward ankle-deep in the slime. He came to a halt presently to get his second wind, knowing that he was safe for the immediate present. The convict guards couldn't leave the chain gang. They would have to summon Captain Jim and a posse. By that time Bulldog would be well on his way. But where?

Half an hour later, ploughing his way through the swamp grass to the river, he was still pondering the question when his ear caught the far-away bay of a hound.

"Dere's dat posse, sho' nuff," Bulldog grunted, and put on speed. He was nearing the river and higher ground, and the going was easier. The Big Swamp, on both sides of the river, was mostly tidal backwash. There wasn't a habitation for miles ahead, and once he got to the river, Bulldog felt he could swim downstream and lose himself in the swamps on the other side. Unless the crime were a very terrible one, a white man's posse wouldn't break its neck searching the swamps for one chain-gang Negro more or less. Bulldog, for all his uncouthness, had a rough-and-ready knowledge of the customs of the country. But for one day the chase would be hot; the cry of the hounds, giving tongue, assured the big Negro of that. Even now the dogs seemed to have gained on him, and he stopped to listen. They were

much nearer than they had been before. Bulldog's worried face changed to reveal a grin.

"Dem houn' dawgs ain' on no leash. Cap'n Jim done loosed 'em!" He chortled aloud as if to convince himself that his ears had not deceived him. He cocked his head on one side and listened intently. "Sho' nuff! Dat's Lady Belle and Junie."

The river line, with its row of live oaks festooned with Spanish moss, was a scant half mile away now, and the going underfoot was solid. Bulldog broke into a steady run. In a few minutes he had reached the first of the live oaks. Back in the glory days of the old South, these magnificent trees had been set out by some long-since-departed rice planter. Now their branches interlaced.

Bulldog swung himself into a tree, got up among the middle branches, ran out a good-sized limb like some giant monkey, paused, and then swung himself into the next tree. The hounds were close now; he could hear them as he climbed. But they were running the trail far ahead of the posse. Through the second tree and into the third swung the ape-like giant. He kept on until he had reached the fifth, from which he dropped swiftly to the ground. He found a stout section of an old branch, tested it with the weight of his hand, and then swung back in a circle to lie in wait beside his trail.

He did not wait long. The hounds went by in full cry, Junie in the lead, Lady Belle at his heels. The bloodhound cares neither for sight nor sound, but follows his nose. Bulldog closed in behind them and grinned broadly as they came to a baffled halt at the foot of the live oak.

"Yo' Lady Belle, yo' Junie, hush dat racket!"

At the sound of his voice the hounds whirled to

face him, baying excitedly at this strange turn of affairs.

"Yo' heah me? Hush dat racket!" Brandishing the broken limb, Bulldog stepped toward them. "Ah feeds yo' wiv mah own han's and yo' runs me down jes' lak Ah was a runaway convic' nigger! Junie, Lady Belle, fo' dat Ah frails yo!"

The broken limb descended in a sidelong swish and Junie was bowled over. A split second later, in the midst of a protracted howl, Lady Belle got the same treatment. Both hounds scrambled to their feet whimpering.

"Hush dat noise! Yo' ain' hurt!" Again the tree branch came swishing down, but this time above their heads. The hounds were cowed. "Tracks me down lak a runaway convic' nigger, will yo'? Now yo' gits!" Bulldog grunted savagely. "Home, Junie! Home, Lady Belle, befo' Ah cuts loose an' frails yo' good!"

With tails down, both hounds turned and fled. Bulldog sent the tree branch soaring through the air after them. It lit at their heels and sent them scurrying faster.

"Why fo' Cap'n Jim let loose dem houn' dawgs? He might knowed Ah'd frail 'em," the big Negro commented philosophically. It was common knowledge that a bloodhound loose on the trail could be beaten back, or frailed, as usage had it. But time for philosophy was short. Bulldog went down to the river at a jog trot, hesitated at its brink and then dived overboard into the deep water that cut into the live-oak bank. He came up with a snort and struck out for the opposite shore.

The tide was strong and carried him well downstream, which was to his advantage in putting dis-

tance between himself and his pursuers. It was in searching for a convenient landing place that he spied a boat pulled up in a bayou. That meant some one else was there, and he allowed himself to be swept farther downstream. It also offered him means of getting upstream with much less trouble than through the swamp. He cut into shore presently, and keeping well under the bank, worked his way around to the boat. It was high and dry, and a pair of oars were tucked under the seats.

Just as Bulldog reached for them there was the reddish-brown flash of a copperhead that had been sunning itself. Outraged at being disturbed, the reptile struck. But the giant Negro was quicker and snatched his hand back out of harm's way.

"Jes' fo' dat, little red snake, Ah whuffs yo'," Bulldog grunted.

Sensing danger, the copperhead squirmed for the gunwale of the boat and the safety of the river. Once more the big Negro was quicker. His heel descended and the snake's head was crushed.

"Whuff!" he grunted. "What Ah tell yo'?" Reaching down, he picked up the remains and tossed them on the sun-baked bank. The whole little drama had consumed not more than ten seconds. Bulldog shoved the boat into the river and clambered quietly aboard.

Once in the current, he pulled upstream, using a long, steady, untiring stroke. As a pickaninny, a flat-bottomed river rowboat had been his hobbyhorse. It would be a full hour before the posse would get within sight of the river, he figured, even if it came that far, now that the hounds were no longer giving cry to guide it. Lady Belle and Junie had cut it straight for home.

Ten miles above the place where he had first struck the river, Bulldog pulled the boat into a bayou, beached it well up among a covering screen of scrub palmetto, and then crawled under it and went to sleep.

The frogs were singing the sun to sleep when he awoke hungry. All along he hadn't any idea at all where he was going, but that was a matter which could easily remain indeterminate. The gnawing at his stomach was serious. He would starve to death in the swamp; so, as a hiding place, the swamp was cast aside.

"Ah got to git me goin'," he mumbled to himself, his lips protruding as they always did when he was perplexed. In an hour it would be dark. He decided to wait. Presently, in the growing dusk, he dragged the boat down to the river, and tucking the oars under the seats as he had found them, he gave it a heave that sent it well out into the stream. He watched while the current caught it up, nosed it around and bore it from sight in the gloom. "Dey don' git me fo' stealin' no boats," he grumbled dispassionately, "but I sho' would relish me some food."

The yellowest of yellow moons, as big as a house, bathed the palmettos with metallic beauty when Bulldog silently and sullenly struck off through the swamp, heading south. He was going down to the sea, but there was no romance in his going. It was the urge of his stomach that led him that way rather than striking inland. The sea coast below the Big Swamp was a series of wind-swept savannas. It was broken by innumerable inlets and fringed with islands. But there were no settlements along this strip for miles and he would be safe from the sight of men. The beaches offered clams, crawfish, and prawn. He

had never been a fugitive before. He was lonely for the companionship of his kind. Most of all, he was hungry.

Hour after hour he went on and on through the swamp, another shadow among a million, yet the only one that moved. His gait was rapid, but not hurried, a relentless, ever-forward swinging rhythm of motion. If he took bearings, he took them subconsciously. He made no plan. At the sea he would find something to eat. His mind travelled no farther than that. He even forgot that he was lonely.

A sudden cry through the stillness of the night sent dread loneliness over him like a pall and stirred every fibre of him, so that he quivered where he stood, as frozen as the other million shadows about him. At once the night had a myriad of tiny sounds that mounted and mounted, until, joined with the pulsations of his own body, they seemed to roar in his ears.

But the cry that had startled him had been human. He sensed that, as he stood listening to hear it again, stood like a statue in the moonlight, motionless and breathless. Had the cry come from above or below him, from before or behind him? He couldn't tell, but as he strained his senses he became gradually aware that he was not alone in the swamp. The moon was well overhead now, and though it was half as bright as day in the upper world, every shadow was as black as pitch. Insects droned, the palmetto leaves caught a fitful breeze and rasped dully, unseen things crackled in the undergrowth.

"Whar yo' is?"

Bulldog jumped two yards at the sound of his own voice, not realizing that he had experienced a psychological moment, that the very stress he had put

on his senses of perception had caused him to speak out, just as a householder who fancies he has heard some one outside his door will call out, "Who's there?" And while he stood there unable to decide whether to remain or run, that human cry came to him again, this time almost at his feet.

His teeth chattered now from mental if not bodily fear. Sounds do not come from nothing; and yet, strain his eyes as he would, he saw only a cabbage palmetto and its jet-black shadow in the place from whence it seemed to him the cry had come. Still he stared at the shadow. Something was there. As he stared, he saw it take form. Slowly at first it grew round and whitish, then its shape became more definite. Bulldog was hypnotized by it now, glued to the spot where he stood. He tried to ask it what it was, but his lips refused to move. He was cold now—cold and shivering. Then, with a rush, his breath came back to him. The thing had moved and was looking at him and he knew what he saw.

"Bulldog!" the thing gasped.

"Jedge Barringer! Ah thought yo' was a ghos'!"

"Thank God you've come," the judge said weakly. "I've had an accident. I'm shot in the leg. Not bad, but I lost a lot of blood before I got the flow stopped. I guess I've crawled ten miles trying to find the river and my boat. But I'm all right now. Who's with you? Captain Jim?"

Bulldog heard and yet didn't hear. Judge Barringer had been hunting and had shot himself in the leg. He had tried to reach his boat and had failed. The boat in question was the one Bulldog had found and appropriated; the boat he had later set adrift. The judge thought Bulldog had been sent out to look for him by Captain Jim.

"You black hyena, don't stand there like that!" Judge Barringer exploded feebly. "I'm no ghost. Call Captain Jim."

"Jedge, Yo' Honour, dey ain' nobody heah but me," said Bulldog, simply stating a fact.

"You mean to say you came for me alone?" Judge Barringer was suffering from a terrible ordeal and was not thinking very clearly. "But how did you know——"

He stopped. Bulldog had not come for him. No one had come for him. He had slipped off quietly to hunt alone, expecting to go on that night to Bryan Neck. The whole idea of some one coming for him had been a sort of nightmare of hope when his brain had failed to function properly. He might still be suffering from hallucinations.

"Bulldog!" He spoke to make sure this towering Negro before him was real.

"Yas-suh, Jedge, Yo' Honour." Time and circumstances could not alter custom, and Bulldog's answer was a tribute to habit.

"Bulldog, what are you doing here?"

"Jedge, Yo' Honour, it's thisaway," the big Negro began.

"That's enough," the judge cut in with a sigh of relief. "As long as it's you, I don't give a damn what you're doing here. Just give me a hand and help me get to the river. I've got a boat there in a little bayou between two live oaks."

Bulldog bent and helped the judge to a sitting posture. The judge goaned and then swore.

"Dat boat, Jedge Barringer?" Bulldog asked. "Dat was'n de boat wiv de red paint on de oar handles?"

"Yes, that's the one. So you know where it is?"

"That makes things easier." Judge Barringer was fast being able to think once more.

"De las' time Ah see dat boat, Jedge, Yo' Honour, she was gwine down de middle ob de 'Geechee all by itself," Bulldog explained honestly.

"You mean adrift?"

"Yas-suh, Jedge, Yo' Honour, jes' lak a ol' tree log."

"All right." It was no time to bewail the loss of a boat. "Then you can take me back in your boat, Bulldog."

"Me, Jedge? Ah swum."

Judge Barringer put out a quick hand to Bulldog's leg. The big Negro's clothes were dry. "You swam across? When?" he asked warily.

"Ah reckon it mus' 'a' been a couple hours befo' dinnertime," Bulldog answered. He knew from experience it was useless to try to lie to Judge Barringer. But the thought of dinnertime prompted him to add hopefully, "Yo' ain't got nuthin' to eat on yo', has yo', Jedge, Yo' Honour?"

"Do you mean to tell me you broke away from the chain gang?"

"No, suh!" Bulldog answered hurriedly. "Ah didn' do nuthin' lak dat. It was thisaway, Jedge, Yo' Honour: Dat Washin'ton nigger die an' Ah cain' see no use in cravin' to hang by mah neck."

Judge Barringer was thoroughly aroused now. "Who told you that nigger died?"

"Chinkapin."

"Where?"

"He's on de chain gang."

"I don't believe it!"

"Befo' de Lawd, Ah wouldn' lie to yo', Jedge Barringer, an' yo' knows it!" Bulldog said fervently.

"I mean I don't believe that nigger died," the judge explained.

"If yo' believes it or don' believes it, Jedge, Yo' Honour, dat don' save mah neck."

"Well, we'll see about that when we get back. In the meantime you can have my word for it, that nigger didn't die."

"Yas-suh, Jedge, Yo' Honour. Ah'll take yo' word for it—on'y, we ain't goin' back," said Bulldog emphatically.

"Do you mean to say you aren't going to help me get out of here—that you'd go away and leave me?" Judge Barringer looked straight up into the face of the big Negro.

"No, suh! Ah ain' goin' away an' leave yo', Jedge Barringer, but also Ah ain' goin' back wiv yo' an' get hung by de neck for no yaller Washin'ton nigger. . . . Ain' yo' even got a san'widge, Jedge?"

Judge Barringer was rapidly, in his weakened state, becoming exasperated. "Now, you listen to me, Bulldog, and don't be a fool. I don't want you to hang any more than you want to hang. Chinkapin never told the truth in his life. If he said that nigger died, he meant it as a joke, and you jumped to conclusions and——"

"No, suh, Jedge, Ah ain' jump to nuthing. Jes when Chinkapin say dat nigger die three flip-flop death-angel buzzards come flyin' right ovah mah haid. . . . If yo' ain't even got a san'widge, we goes hungry, both of us; but, Jedge, we ain' gwine back fo' to git me hung." Bulldog was adamant on that point.

"If I had a gun, Bulldog, I'd shoot you!" Judge Barringer threatened.

"Yas-suh, Jedge, Yo' Honour," Bulldog agreed

solemnly. "But dat wouldn't be gittin' me hung by de neck. Ah saw oncet a lynch nigger an' his neck was stretch out as long as mah arm. No, suh, Jedge Barringer, when Ah dies Ah dies so dey can put me in de coffin beautiful."

"Can't you do something besides talk like a fool?" Judge Barringer felt that his strength was slipping away from him. The hope that had come with Bulldog's arrival was fast disappearing. His head sank resignedly to his chest. His brain was beginning to grow muddled again from sheer exhaustion, when he felt that Bulldog had taken him by the shoulder. From a long way off he could hear the big Negro's voice.

"Jedge Barringer, don' yo' go passin' out. Ah'll git you home someways. Gives me yo' arm an' I totes you to Ossabaw."

Ossabaw? That was an island at the mouth of the river fully fifteen miles distant. Now Judge Barringer, semi-conscious as he was, knew that Bulldog was crazy. If he should be taken to Ossabaw, he would be farther away from help than ever. He would stay rather where he was. It was warm here, and quiet.

But when the black giant reached down and picked him up he made no protest. He was not even aware that he was being carried. Under this new burden, Bulldog found the going heavy in the swamp and made for the higher ground near the river bank. It was the wind coming up from the sea some two hours later that had a reviving effect on Judge Barringer. He opened his eyes to see a shadow a yard away.

"Is that you, Bulldog?" he asked.

"Yas-suh, Jedge, dis is me."

"If you won't do anything, why do you stay here?" Judge Barringer said petulantly in his weakness.

"Shucks, Jedge, we ain' heah no mo'; we's half-way to Ossabaw. Yo' weighs like ce-ment, Jedge. When Ah gits me a li'l' res' we goes on."

"Halfway to Ossabaw?"

"Yas-suh, Jedge."

Judge Barringer lapsed again. It was useless to try to argue with the crazy hyena. If Bulldog had made up his mind to take him to Ossabaw, he would have to go, being unable to resist. He saw a picture of himself as a fellow Crusoe, fugitive from justice with a chain-gang Negro. But if that leg of his lost its soreness, if he ever was able to get around again, he swore that it would be much better for Bulldog to have hanged. A sudden jolt, a feeling that he was floating, and he knew that they were on their way.

When he opened his eyes again they were still on the go. His injured leg—it had been a flesh wound in the calf—was numb and did not pain him now. It occurred to him that he might even be able to walk. But the side-to-side sway, as he was carried along, seemed much easier; and besides, there was little weight to his body now; he felt as light as a feather. Years after, he was to look back at that moment and wonder what ever had put such a crazy notion in his head. He closed his eyes again.

"Jedge Barringer! . . . Jedge Barringer!" Bulldog was calling to him, but it was cold and he did not want to get up.

"Jedge Barringer!"

That was not Bulldog's voice. He roused himself with a great effort and sat up. A bent old Negro was on his knees before him, his face a picture of despair. Suddenly it was wreathed in smiles of thankfulness.

"Jedge Barringer, yo' is alive, thank de Lawd!

Ah been callin' yo' de longes' time until Ah jes' 'bout reckon yo' was a corp'."

"Daddy Ike!" Judge Barringer gasped. "Where did you come from? Where's Bulldog?"

"Down on de plantation, Jedge." The old Negro's face looked puzzled. "How come yo' don' know Ah ain' nebber lef' Ossabaw, Jedge?"

And then Judge Barringer remembered. Ossabaw Island was the seat of the old Depford plantation, now only a relic of the past, and Daddy Ike was the oldest Negro in the section. He still lived in the old ramshackle slave quarters and eked out a living by fishing and raising truck. Every one knew Daddy Ike, and yet Judge Barringer had forgotten until now. This was the reason they had come to Ossabaw. It was dawn. Bulldog had been carrying him all night. He owed his life to the big Negro.

Daddy Ike misread the judge's thoughts. "Bulldog he gone," the old Negro said quickly. "Yo' fer-git all 'bout him, Jedge Barringer, while Ah helps yo' to mah boat."

"That crazy nigger's gone? Where?"

"Yas-suh, Jedge, Bulldog's de craziest nigger in de worl'. Why fo' yo' an' me gib two goobers wheah dat fool nigger's gone? Us is gwine to git yo' home, Jedge. How's yo' laig?" Daddy Ike changed the subject.

Judge Barringer smiled. "Daddy Ike, you old rascal, don't lie to me. Bulldog saved my life. Where is he?"

"Jedge Barringer, Ah don' know. De las' time Ah seed him he was sittin' in mah house eatin' hominy grits an' side meat an' yams an' black-eye peas; an' lissen to me, Jedge, if Ah don't git yo' home and git back dat crazy nigger's gwine to eat me into de po'-house. But Ah don' know wheah he is now."

"All right," Judge Barringer laughed. "We'll see about that later. Where's your boat, Daddy Ike? If you'll give me a hand I think I can hobble."

"Dat's right, Jedge, lets us go. Heah's de boat. Bulldog he swum across to de island an' like to scairt me senseless, comin' up to mah do' in dem chain-gang clo's. Ah'd 'a' come across to yo' right away, Jedge, but dat crazy Bulldog said Ah got to feed him fust. If we don' get yo' home he'll eat up all mah winter rations!"

With the old Negro's help, Judge Barringer managed to bear his weight on the uninjured leg and hobble down the few feet of bank to the boat. Ossa-baw Island lay like a black blob in the early morning mist a quarter of a mile away. But their way lay in the opposite direction, and Daddy Ike, for all his eighty-odd years, lost no time in pushing off. Bulldog had told him to bring back a pair of overalls and a shirt, and he wanted to get back as soon as possible before the ravenous giant ate him "into de po'house." Also he was genuinely alarmed for the escaped convict's sake and wanted him to get away before the law came after him.

"Yo' ain' gwine to say nuthin' 'bout Bulldog, is yo', Jedge?" the old man asked presently. "Dat nigger's crazy, but fo' all he size, he's jes' lak a baby."

"I'll let you know later," Judge Barringer said absently. He was pondering the question of just what was to be done with Bulldog. He knew that the big Negro would not go far. It was only a matter of time before he would be caught in some shanty or other, giving way to his appetite. But Judge Barringer was also convinced in his own mind that the story of the Washington Negro's death had been a hoax—a hoax that had worked too well. And when

they landed at one of the first river settlements where the judge could get a conveyance that would take him back to the city, the first thing he did was to get to a telephone and wait while he had his secretary at the other end give him a report from the hospital.

"Discharged yesterday, Judge," the secretary reported. "It would be pretty hard to find him now. After his experience with Bulldog I guess he's left town."

"All right; didn't want him anyway," said the judge. "Tell Dr. Rafe Kirby to go out to the hospital and wait for me. I'll be there in about an hour, bringing an accident case."

Before the secretary could question him further, he hung up the receiver. Judge Barringer hated personal publicity unless it had to do with politics.

He turned to the storekeeper, whose telephone he had used. "Would you mind telling that old nigger out there I want to see him a moment?"

Daddy Ike came in with his hat in his hand. "What dey say, Jedge?" he asked anxiously.

"That Washington nigger was let out of the hospital yesterday and by now he's halfway home."

"Praise de Lawd for dat!" breathed Daddy Ike.

"And tell Bulldog when he finishes eating that he is to come and report to me before he goes back to the chain gang," Judge Barringer said. The least he could do was suspend sentence, but if possible, he wanted to do something more substantial than that.

Thorough examination by Dr. Rafe Kirby showed that the gunshot wound was superficial. The hardship of crawling mile after mile through the swamp had caused most of the judge's suffering. He was promised that he would be around with the aid of a crutch in a day or two.

"But I thought you went after railbirds, Judge," Dr. Kirby said with a grin when the patient's wound had been dressed.

"Rafe, if you-all don't want me to lose my reputation as a gentleman before this young lady nurse, get out of here quick," Judge Barringer bellowed.

It was the following Monday, still hobbling with the aid of a crutch, that Judge Barringer returned to the bench. There had been no word from Bulldog and he did not quite know what to make of it. When the first case was called, a small Negro, whose head was almost completely shrouded in bandages, stood before him. Judge Barringer looked down compassionately.

"Well, what did you run into—a truck?" he asked.

There was a movement in the prisoners' pen. The Monday-morning crowd was being swayed by some unseen force. Then the force came into view in the shuffling, sheepish form of Bulldog.

"Yas-suh, Jedge, Yo' Honour, heah Ah is!"

"Bulldog!"

Judge Barringer was accustomed to almost anything that might happen in his court, but for the moment he was nonplussed. "Didn't Daddy Ike bring you my message?"

"Yas-suh, Jedge, Yo' Honour, it was thisaway——"

"Why didn't you come to me if you got my message?" Judge Barringer interrupted, his dismay turning to reproof.

"Yas-suh, Jedge, Yo' Honour, Ah'm comin' to dat. It was thisaway," Bulldog pleaded apologetically: "If yo' was to take dem rags offen dat little half-size nigger, yo'd see it was Chinkapin hidin' behin' 'em."

“Chinkapin!”

“Yas-suh, Jedge, de same what tol’ me dat lie ’bout dat Washin’ton nigger dyin’. Dis heah Chinkapin cause all de trouble, Jedge, Yo’ Honour. If it wasn’ fo’ Chinkapin’s lyin’, Jedge, Ah wouldn’ ’a’ bus’ loose from de chain gang. If it wasn’ fo’ dat little han’ful lyin’, I wouldn’ hab tote’ yo’ all de way to Ossabaw. Don’ blame me fo’ totin’ yo’ to Ossabaw, Jedge; blame Chinkapin; he done it. Dat Chinkapin nigger’s to blame fo’ ev’y las’ bit ob de trouble. So’s when Ah’m comin’ from Ossabaw Sa’d day night, comin’ to see you, Jedge, Ah bumps into dat Chinkapin an’ Ah jes nachelly squeeze his lyin’ haid fo’ him and gib him a couple ob shakes and dat’s all.”

“Why did you wait until Saturday to come?” Judge Barringer asked.

“’Deed, Jedge, Yo’ Honour, how come Ah could come befo’ Sa’d day? Cap’n Jim didn’t let Chinkapin loose offen de chain gang until Sa’d day,” said Bulldog honestly.

Judge Barringer did not smile this morning. The business before him was too personal. The little bandaged Negro had lied to Bulldog. But in breaking away from the chain gang, Bulldog had been the means of saving the judge’s life, for he might never have been found in the swamp. It had been his purpose to suspend sentence on the big Negro, to take him under his wing and get him a job. Now that seemed impossible.

“What do you think I ought to do, Bulldog?” he asked the giant gravely.

“Who, me?” Bulldog looked incredulous. “Shucks, Jedge Barringer, Ah’ don’ know what yo’ ought to do, but Ah knows what yo’ is gwine to do.”

"What's that?"

Bulldog grew suddenly serious. He had heard enough tales of road gangs in the northern counties of the state, where it was cold in winter, where the prisoners were badly treated, and the food was poor.

"Yo' ain' funnin' wiv me, Jedge, Yo' Honour? Yo' ain' holdin' it agin me for totin' yo' all de way down to Ossabaw? 'Deed, Jedge Barringer"—and here pathos entered Bulldog's voice—" 'deed, if yo' sen' me anywheres besides to de Fahm, yo'll bus' Cap'n Jim's heart."

Judge Barringer sighed a sigh of relief. "All right, Bulldog, you win. Six months on the Fahm. And you, Chinkapin," he said, turning to the little Negro—"you go with him."

"Yas-suh, Jedge, Yo' Honour," Bulldog grinned. As long as he could be under the gentle tutelage of Captain Jim and Uncle Henry, the cook, he was happy.

"An' yo' kin trus' me, Jedge Barringer," he said solemnly, "Ah won' bus' loose no mo'."

QUESTIONS

1. What arouses immediate interest in this story?
2. Give a brief character sketch of Bulldog.
3. Why is he before the Judge as the story opens?
4. Why had Capt. Jim released Bulldog a few days before the expiration of his sentence?
5. How did his plan work?
6. Who is "Uncle Henry"? Why is he serving sentence on the Farm? Why is he fond of Bulldog?
7. Describe the chain-gang.
8. What is Chinkapin's method of stirring up trouble?
9. What superstitious element lends conviction to his story?
10. How does Bulldog escape?
11. What is "frailing"? How does Bulldog frail the hounds?

12. What is the accident with which Judge Barringer has met?
13. What difficulty does he have in prevailing upon Bulldog to assist him?
14. Why does Bulldog refuse to return home with the Judge?
15. Describe the strange journey to Ossabaw.
16. What is Bulldog's plan upon reaching Ossabaw?
17. How does Daddy Ike enter into the plot?
18. Describe Bulldog's dramatic reappearance in the court room.
19. How had the Judge planned to reward Bulldog?
20. What makes it impossible to do so?
21. Who solves the problem of what is to be done with Bulldog?
22. What effect is gained by Bulldog's reappearance before the court in the final scene?
23. How does this story differ from the average modern Negro story?
24. Cite incidents which illustrate Bulldog's simplicity—his logic—his sense of humor—his loyalty.
25. Read a Negro story by Octavus Roy Cohen or Irvin S. Cobb. Compare with "Bulldog" as to character, humor, and dialect.

THE TRUE ROMANCE

BY

ALBERT PAYSON TERHUNE

ALBERT PAYSON TERHUNE

(1872-)

Until Mr. Terhune began writing dog stories, he led rather a commonplace life as a struggling young man in New York City, reporting for the *New York Evening World*. The age of thirty-two found him several thousand dollars in debt, trying to support a family on a reporter's salary of \$47.50 per week. Then came the discovery that his employers were contemplating substituting a younger man in his stead. Realizing that losing his job at such a time meant disaster in his household, he determined upon a rigid program of work. First he would devote himself more painstakingly to his reporting; and second he would work five hours at home, five evenings a week, on serial fiction which he might sell to some magazine. His ambition was to get out of debt, build up a reserve fund, and buy a home at Pompton Lakes, New Jersey.

With his plan carefully formed he went to work. Five hours an evening after a day's work was a difficult assignment, but his first serial, "The Secret of the Blue House," sold at the rate of a fifth of a cent a word, and brought in \$125. He felt compensated for having gone without his lunches for weeks to pay for having the story typed.

From then on he continued to market serials, with better and better results. His second brought him \$180, the next \$250, then \$300, \$400, and finally \$500. His problem of keeping alive was then solved; and, probably as a result of his new energy, he did not lose his job but instead got his salary raised.

With his new success, life assumed a different aspect; an assured income brought the realization of his ambitions. With the home at Sunnybank, Pompton Lakes, came his interest in dogs. Sunnybank collies are now famous because of their fine breeding and of the exceeding popularity of Mr. Terhune's stories about them. All of his dog stories are not only entertaining as stories, but are entirely authentic.

Albert Payson Terhune was born in Newark, New Jersey, in 1872. His father was the Rev. Dr. Edward Payson Terhune; his mother, Mary Virginia Terhune, was an author of note.

Mr. Terhune is a graduate of Columbia University and has studied in Paris, Rome and Geneva. In 1901 he married Anice Stockton, who also has many stories and musical compositions to her credit.

THE TRUE ROMANCE

“‘Then did the hend Sir Ghelent hie him forth once for the deeds of derring-do, for the honor of his ladye fair,’” read Gareth, with much distinctness, as though for the benefit of a slightly deaf hearer—although his listener’s ears chanced to be far more acute than his own.

“‘And the chiefest of his feats, in this his new quest, was the slaying of the giant, Thorkynd, whenas the giant did seek to hale the golden Rosamunda to his donjon-keep, to be his own bride; she that aye looked upon him with a loathing.

“‘For albeit Thorkynd was clad in proof and wielded his fearsome great battle-ax, forged for him in the smithy of the magic-dealing dwarfs, and albeit Sir Ghelent was with no armor and bare in his hand no weapons save only his Bishop-blest sword, Balmung, yet did he come upon the giant and in single combat he smote him so that he died. Thus was the’——

“It was the giant that was smote—smitten—so that he died,” explained Gareth. “The story reads as if it might have been either Thorkynd or the hend Sir Ghelent that died of the smite. But it was Thorkynd. Because it goes on to tell how Sir Ghelent rescued the golden Rosamunda from the donjon-keep. A donjon-keep is some kind of a jail. There’s a picture of him rescuing her from it.”

The boy lowered his eyes toward the book again. But he did not read. At least he read over only one phrase—“the golden Rosamunda”—and that he murmured under his breath and almost reverently. His hearer had shown commendable patience thus far with the perusal. Now, the half-whispered it—

eration of "Ro-s-s-s-amunda" carried a sibilance that stirred his nerves.

He got up, head on one side, eying the boy expectantly. His feet pattered a tattoo on the study floor. Gareth closed the battered old volume; as his chum's sudden excitement banished his own vivid picture of himself as Sir Ghelent and Rosamund Hallett as the golden heroine.

"That's the trouble with you, Gyp," he said, in mild annoyance. "Whenever I try to forget you're a dog and talk sensibly to you or read to you, you either start to scratch fleas or else you tease me to take you for a run. At that, you're better company than most of the fellows," he added conciliatingly, as he groped in his pockets for a bit of dog-biscuit.

At the gesture, the compact Doberman pinscher ceased to dance meaninglessly around his master and came to sudden attention. Gareth flicked a morsel into the air at random. It struck a corner of a bookshelf and caromed back into the room. While it was still in mid-air, Gyp caught it.

His shining black body seemed scarce to have moved. Yet he had located the flying bit of food and gauged the distance and snapped it. Now, munching the fragment with appreciation, he stood eagerly waiting for another bit to be tossed.

Forty pounds and more did the Doberman weigh. Apart from his wiry long legs, that forty-odd pounds was a mass of dynamic whalebone. His short jet coat shimmered in the sun; its dense blackness relieved only by the bright tan "points" on face and forepaws. His eyeballs were alight; his pricked ears and three-inch tail were vibrant. Brain and fun, as well as flaming courage, lurked behind the dark little eyes and in the eager carriage.

Looking amusedly down at him, Gareth wondered why a dog's expression could be so fraught with gay intelligence and yet why that intelligence should stop so mysteriously short of the dullest human sense. He was not the first nor the millionth dog-owner to wonder at this; nor to thrill a little at the queer pathos of it.

To the solitary twelve-year-old boy, in the rambling country house, Gyp was more than a mere dog. He was an ideal pal—a perfect barrier against loneliness and boredom. Long since, Gareth had fallen into the habit of talking to his Doberman as though Gyp were a boy like himself; and even of reading aloud to him.

Not being a fool, Gareth knew well that even the cleverest dog—and the right kind of Doberman is one of the very cleverest—can not grasp the meaning of more than one spoken word in ten. But it amused and solaced him—as it has solaced and amused many a lonely grown man or woman—to chat to him as to another human.

Until a brief month ago, Gareth had not realized his own solitude during the long country months of each year. Gyp was enough of a chum to keep him from feeling the absence of youths of his own age near the vast old summer estate of his parents. There were a million things every day for boy and dog to do. And, when outdoor fun began to pall, there was always this huge old room with its corner-shelf or what Gareth called the “used-to-be yarns”—Percy's Reliques, Froissart, Malory and the rest.

It was a magic corner-shelf. Its shabby pages had the power to carry him back centuries on centuries, and to merge him into the personality of any mediæval hero he might affect.

Gareth had thrilled at the sagas of battle and of guile. But, whenever the hero ceased to fare forth on the warpath and rapturously sought the bower of Iseult or Gudrun or Guinevere or Vivian, he found his attention slurring impatiently along the yellowed pages toward the next combat. There was something about a good broadsword or yew-bow scrimmage that stirred all the blood in Gareth's body. But where was the sense in messing up a grand adventure story by slopping a lot of love-slush into it?

It seemed funny, too, that such peerless champions as Launcelot and Olaf and Gawaine should suddenly get mushy and weak-hearted as soon as they came within a mile of some yellow-haired damsel with an outlandish name. Gareth lost all patience with them at such spoony times as that.

Then in a mere thirty-day month everything had changed.

With eyes no longer blinded by boyish normality, he scanned the "used-to-be yarns," almost slighting the "deeds of derring-do" for the sake of the love passages. At last he understood.

Galahad had been one of his prime heroes. Now he found himself mildly bored by the Spotless One who alone of Arthur's paladins, had had no sweet-heart. There was something sadly lacking about Galahad—even though his strength were "as the strength of ten."

No, it was not a big-eyed girl-child who had caused Gareth Ross to see a new world and to read new meanings in erst silly love-scenes. It was Rosamund Hallett; no girl at all; but a middle-aged woman of twenty-three.

At least, she had seemed middle-aged to Gareth the evening she arrived at Rossacres for the month. But hourly she had waxed younger. That, or he had

waxed older. He wasn't sure—but it made no difference which.

Rosamund Hallett had come to her cousin's at Rossacres to convalesce from an attack of pneumonia that had left her pitiably weak and thin. The quiet and the mountain air had wrought miracles upon her. Daily, Gareth had seen her grow less and less wan and pallid; stronger, rosier, gayer. Hourly his imagination had endowed her with more and more loveliness.

Her parents were busy folk. But for the boy, Rosamund would have spent much of her time alone; except on the days when Saul Darroll motored out seventy miles to see her.

Rosamund, as time went on, seemed to resent vaguely these insistent visits of Saul's. Indeed, twice she had told Gareth she would much rather go for a walk with Gyp and himself than to sit up formally and make conversation with Darroll. She said so almost vexedly.

Her annoyance at the calls of the beefily huge young motorist awoke in Gareth a dislike for the man who was pestering and boring her by many visitations.

Hitherto Saul Darroll had seemed more or less a hero to Gareth. The man was an occasional caller at Rossacres, even before Rosamund came there to stay. He had been a football player in his time, and something of an oarsman; besides winning the heavy-weight boxing championship at college.

Gareth had admired his easy strength, the light poise of his great figure, the dearth of brag at his athletic prowess. But now the boy was growing to detest Saul. He would have detested any one whose presence was disagreeable to Rosamund. But for

some unknown reason, he was finding it ridiculously easy to detest this special intruder.

For one thing, when Darroll was there, Gareth and Rosamund could have none of the rambles and the confidential talks that starred their long days together at Rossacres. True, Gareth stayed politely near, whenever he could, during the big man's calls; and right manfully did his share to keep up the general conversation which of late showed a tendency to sag. But even then, he could see how Rosamund disliked Darroll there.

More than once the boy racked his brain for a tactful way of conveying to Saul that these visits were unwelcome to their recipient. But never could he hit on the right words. From babyhood, the sacredness of hospitality had been drilled into his cosmos. He could not shame that high instinct by hinting to a guest that his absence might be pleasanter for every one. So he endured seeing his divinity bored and distressed. Even he sought to lighten the ordeal for her by taking on himself as much as possible of the unspontaneous triple conversation.

Rosamund had awakened in her host's son a feeling far nearer to priest-like worship than to mere human love. Innumerable boys have gone through the same phase of adoration at the shrine of some woman double their own age. It is a sensation no more to be confused with the hobbledehoy calf-love of the late 'teens than with the mature love-making of later life. Probably it is the holiest and most selfless—if most deliriously idiotic—emotion known to humanity. Mercifully brief, it serves one for smiles in after years. But such smiles are amusedly tender; not derisive.

Together Rosamund and Gareth had roamed the woods and hills. Together they had fished and motored. Together they had discussed with tense earnestness the solemnity of life. Together they had enthused over the "used-to-be yarns." Together they had romped with Gyp.

The Doberman had consented to open a heart to Rosamund hitherto devoted to Gareth alone. He and the girl grew to be good friends. He and the girl and the boy went everywhere together. It was a glorious month for all three of them. For two of them, at any rate.

Lately, Gareth had taken to wondering if Rosamund was not losing some of her earlier joy in it. The suspicion hurt him like a stomach-kick—and he tried hard to dismiss it. True, most of the time she was the jolly and worshipful goddess of yore. But once in a while she was prone to sink into abstracted silences, whence she could be aroused by only the third or fourth repetition of whatever Gareth chanced to say to her.

He noticed that these fits of unhappy reverie always followed one of Saul's visits. The discovery increased tenfold his ire toward the man whose hateful calls so annoyed her. Nor could he understand what made Darroll come to Rossacres ten times as often as of old. It was increasingly hard for him to be civil to the fellow.

To-day, as he put down the chronicle of the hound Sir Ghelent, he glanced at the clock. Daily, from two till three in the afternoon, Rosamund still lay down for a nap, though her sinuous young strength had seeped back to her during the month of outdoor life and rest.

"She'll be up by now, Gyp," he announced to the

Doberman, thrusting the frayed volume into its place on the shelf, and instantly transporting himself back from the twelfth century to the twentieth. "Remember, we're going over to Coulter Pond for bass this afternoon! Come along."

The dog was delighted at the prospect of action. Gayly he danced down the stairs ahead of the hurrying boy. On the porch they found Rosamund awaiting them. Very fresh and flushed and pretty she looked, after her brief sleep; her corn-colored hair piled softly above a dainty face which just then looked rather like that of a girl of fifteen than an ex-invalid of twenty-three. Her tweed sport clothes gave her slight body a boyish air.

Up to her scampered Gyp, circling happily about her and leaping high. Gareth followed, little more sedately.

"I was afraid maybe you'd overslept," he said. "Dad told Swalm to have the car here at half-past three to take us to the pond. That's twenty minutes to wait. Have a good nap?"

"A beautiful nap. I never thought I'd be able to go to sleep the way I do up here, in the very heart of the day. I'm settling down to old age, I suppose."

"No indeed you're not," Gareth assured her, gallantly. "Twenty-three isn't but just about the very beginning of *middle* age. It isn't really old. Honest, it isn't. Besides, you don't look anywhere near as much like twenty-three as you did when you came here. You've got lots of years—*several* years anyhow—before you'll even begin to be old. And when you are, you won't hardly look it."

Rosamund gave one of her unaccountable laughs—one of the laughs that always puzzled Gareth as

much as it enraptured him. She seemed to him to laugh, now and then, for no known reason. But she had a laugh that somehow thrilled him. He had grown to listen for it.

"It's ever so dear of you to comfort me that way," she said with gravity as sudden as had been her mirth. "I am going to remember what you just said. It will ease my mind so much, whenever I get to being afraid I really *am* an old lady. It's nice to know I'm only middle-aged."

"That's all you are," Gareth insisted. "And I'm not even sure that twenty-three is really middle-aged. If it is, it's only about the beginning of it."

"It must be wonderful to be only twelve," she sighed.

"No," he contradicted. "It isn't. You see, it's different with men than it is with women. When a fellow is twelve, folks look on him as a kid—and they don't seem to understand that maybe he has as much sense as—as lots of people that are fifteen or so. That was the first thing I liked so much about *you*. You never treated me as if I was a kid. You saw right away that I wasn't. You and I have always talked as if we were the same age. That's why we're such grand friends. From the first—well, from pretty near the first—I felt I'd every bit as soon talk to you as to talk to somebody that's really young. Then, by the time you'd been here a week, I'd rather have talked to you than any one else there is."

He turned very red at his own avowal—and changed the subject by hooping his arms high in the air and whistling to Gyp. The Doberman answered the gesture by springing through the impromptu

hoop and landing on the slippery floor as lightly as a kitten.

It was one of a score of simple tricks Gareth had taught him—tricks the dog learned with bewildering ease. Gareth and the girl eyed the exploit with admiration. Gyp, noting their approval, grinned widely—and circled around them with mincing steps, his three-inch stub of a tail vibrating.

“What a pity they ever cut his tail off!” commenced Rosamund. “I’m sure it must have been worth his keeping.”

“That’s the trouble with Dobermans,” explained Gareth. “Dad says fashion catches them going and coming. Their tails are chopped off when they are babies. Then when they’re about half grown their ears are cropped to a sharp point, like Gyp’s. Dad says it’s a form of torture that ought to be forbidden by law. He says ear-cropping is forbidden in England and that some day it is going to be forbidden over here, too.”

“Still, there’s enough of Gyp left to make him the dearest dog I ever played with,” said Rosamund, stroking the glistening black head and rumpling the mistreated prick-ears. “He— What’s the matter?” she broke off, as Gareth turned toward the steps.

“I just remembered,” he answered, “I left the bait-pail behind the stables, in the horsepond, to keep it cool. I caught a dandy lot of minnows this morning. I’ll have to wait when Swalm brings the car. I——”

“I’ll go with you,” volunteered Rosamund, while Gyp, at a bound, cleared the steps, and stood waiting for his master at their foot. “I’m glad to get the exercise, after my nap. *That* isn’t a sign of age, anyhow, is it?”

Together they swung along the lawn and across to the stables. The dog walked primly a yard behind Gareth's left heel, as he had been taught to do except when the longed-for command of "Go ahead!" set him at liberty to gallop.

Past the stables went the three, and toward the concrete pool where the Rossacres horses were wont to drink. As they neared it, Gareth stopped for an instant to retie his low canvas shoe. Obediently, Gyp halted with him. Rosamund turned about to see what made the boy pause.

To her amazement, Gareth leaped up, rushing at her and thrusting her, bodily, to one side.

Thrown off-balance, Rosamund staggered and fell to the grass. Indignant, amazed, she got up before her light body had fairly touched ground. But Gareth's shoulders were toward her.

Standing where her next step would have carried her, the boy was stamping furiously with both feet. Gyp, growling and snapping, was striving to join in the mysterious exercise. But at an angry word of command from Gareth, the dog stepped aside unwillingly; though still aquiver with a rage in which there seemed a thread of terror.

Then Rosamund saw the purport of the lad's fierce stampings. Under his punitive heels writhed helpless a fat and dirty-hued snake, perhaps three feet long.

"A copperhead," said Gareth pantingly, as he drove his heel for the last time down on the ugly triangular skull.

"Lucky I got that glimpse of him as he stuck his head up over the grass. Another step and you'd have been right on top of him. Gee; I'm sorry I had to give you that gosh-awful shove. But there wasn't

any time. Please, I hope I didn't hurt you much!" he ended, his voice wabbling with concern at the possible harm he might have inflicted on his gold-white idol.

For an instant the horrified girl did not speak. Then, on hysterical impulse, she stepped forward and kissed the boy on his worried mouth.

"I think," she said, her sweet voice not quite steady, her blue eyes brimming, "I think you're braver than any one I ever knew. Braver and quicker-witted— You *are*, Gareth!—Not one person in ten would have thought quickly enough to knock me out of the way like that—not one person in a hundred would have dared to stamp, with thin shoes, on a copperhead. It——"

She swayed a little, a wave of sickness rushing over her at the memory of her death-peril. But Gareth did not spring to catch her.

Instead, he stood stupidly—scarlet of face, expressionless, breathless, his mind in an unbelieving daze of rapture.

She had kissed him! On the mouth she had kissed him! Yes, and of her own accord.

Thus had the golden Rosamunda in the "used-to-be yarns" kissed Sir Ghelent. Thus had the magic mantle's wearer kissed Sir Caradoc. Thus, too, had Guinevere kissed Launcelot du Lac. Thus, forsooth, had all the mystic maidens of old made known their love to the knights they had chosen for their own.

Rosamund Hallett had kissed him! That could mean only one thing. It was impossible. But it had happened. *She had kissed him.*

Thus it was that he stood gaping at her, his blank face foolish and empty. He stared; but he did not

see. All he could do was to remember and to marvel.

Thus he did not note her momentary faintness, her plucky recovery and the reassuring smile where-with she was striving to banish his trance of supposed fright at her averted danger.

"And I'm all right," she went on, comfortingly. "It didn't hurt me a single bit when you pushed me aside. It was my own awkwardness that made me tumble over. But oh, you are splendid, Gareth! I——"

"I'll be through college when I'm twenty-one!" he croaked, hoarsely, finding words and jabbering them as fast as they splashed into his bemused brain. "And ready to go to work to support a—to support anybody at all. And when I'm twenty-one, you'll only be thirty-two. That isn't terribly old, either—for—for thirty-two."

The smile of reassurance on Rosamund's newly pallid face gave way to a look of eager alarm. Apparently, the boy's moment of heroism had been followed by something akin to shell-shock, which was causing him to babble meaninglessly. His croaked assertion as to their relative ages nine years hence made no sense to her at all.

She laid a hand on his arm, her own recent shock half-forgotten in worry lest Gareth's mind be temporarily unhinged by what he had just gone through.

The touch brought Gareth back to earth. Instantly he was swept by rolling cross-currents of self-consciousness and shyness. He broke into loud and discordant whistling as he kicked aside the snake's body and swaggered over to the horsepond for the bait-pail.

"Well," he declaimed as he swaggered back to her, "if we want to start promptly at half past three,

I suppose we may as well be getting to the house. I heard the car just now. Sure you don't feel too bad to go fishing? If you do——"

"I dont," she declared, touched by his apparent game efforts to shake off the memory of his late experience with the copperhead. "I'll be ever so glad to. I'm all right again. Really I am. If you're sure *you* are."

"Me?" he exclaimed with a very evident astonishment. "Sure. Why not? It's nothing to kill a snake. At least, it wasn't after *you* were safe out of its way. Only of course then Gyp had to come horning in—and I had to make him quit."

"Why didn't you set him on the snake, instead of risking your own——?"

"Set Gyp onto him?" asked Gareth in utter bewilderment. "Why, he might have been killed! I would have chanced that, to keep you from getting hurt, if I couldn't have done it myself. It would—it'd have been worth it! But you were out of danger—and I could settle the business myself. So why should I have yanked Gyp into it?"

He was talking very fast and very loud, to cover this blindingly new situation which he had not the remotest idea how to handle. He rejoiced that the conversation could be kept for the time in commonplace channels.

"Gyp would do what I tell him, all right," he went on, safe while he could keep the subject to his dog. "He'd do it, no matter what it was. Wouldn't you, Gyp? I——"

His rambling speech ended in a grunt. They had rounded the stables and were recrossing the lawn. There, at the steps, stood the car Gareth had heard.

But it was not one of his father's cars, nor was Swalm waiting at the wheel to bear them to the bass-fishing.

No, this was Saul Darroll's shiny roadster. And, coming toward them was the white-clad Darroll himself. The man's hateful face was twisted into what Gareth deemed the most hideous and malevolent grin of greeting he had ever beheld.

Darroll had come to pay one of his lothly calls on Rosamund. That was evident. Equally evident was it that there could be no bass-fishing to-day. The man always stayed an unconscionable time. Then Mrs. Ross probably would be so short-sightedly hospitable as to ask him to stay over for dinner. Mothers were queerly obtuse.

Gareth stopped short, leaving Rosamund to move forward alone over the smooth grass to meet the caller. Ordinarily he was willing to sacrifice himself by remaining with them throughout Saul's visits; to bear the brunt of the conversation and to try to lighten for Rosamund some of the boredom that he knew must be hers. But to-day was different.

With the memory of that sacred kiss filling his mind—with the need to think out carefully all it entailed—he could not bring himself to be civil and chatty with a man he despised. For once, let Rosamund bear the brunt of the visit herself! At the least, let her entertain him until Gareth could have a half-hour or so alone, to face this new world of glory into which he had been plunged.

He snapped his fingers to Gyp and wheeled about in his tracks. Thus when, a moment later, Rosamund turned to speak to him, the boy had vanished.

"Allah be praised!" said Darroll devoutly, as he followed her questing gaze. "But I suppose it would

be too much to ask of Fate, for him to keep out of the way all afternoon. He's certain to be back in a minute. And then good-by to any chance of being alone with you! I used to like boys. Gareth especially. But lately I've begun to think Herod was a benefactor. A——"

"*Don't!*" she rebuked him, almost sharply. "If it wasn't for Gareth—and if he wasn't the gallantest, splendidest little chap on earth—there would be another car besides yours here by this time. It would have been the doctor's—and it might have been too late."

"Why——!"

"I'll tell you about it. But let's go somewhere for a walk. My nerves are all in tatters—though I wouldn't let Gareth see they were—or that I couldn't be as plucky and calm about it as he was. Let's walk. I couldn't sit down quietly just now, to save my soul. Let's walk—and let's walk fast! Anywhere at all. Now let me tell you what that gorgeous youngster did!"

Gareth had slipped behind the stables with eel-like speed. There he deposited the useless bait-pail and grumbled to the passing Swalm that the fishing-trip was off. With Gyp at his heels he struck out for the woods.

At the woods' far edge was an interlacing copse of young linden-trees, that formed a perfect if lopsided bower. The ground beneath was soft, and it was shut off from view by the drooping screen of leaves.

Often Gareth came here to read. But to-day he was beyond reading. Why follow the adventures and loves of mere book-folk when he was *living* a far more dazzling romance? He stretched himself

on the ground and lay there moveless, his mind turned inward.

Gyp had not been kissed on the mouth by Rosamund Hallett or by any one at all. Thus Gyp had no golden moments to live over in silent and unmoving retrospect. He was a Doberman. A Doberman is essentially a dog of action, not of dreamy meditation.

While he had been only too glad to follow his master through the woods and to this leafen cave, yet, now that they were here, time presently began to hang heavy.

There was nothing to do but lie still and watch Gareth lying even more still. This was not Gyp's idea of a jolly afternoon. Indoors, of course, a dog was expected to be quiet. But out here there were so many thousand pleasanter things to do—though his master for once did not seem to realize it.

Gyp sought to draw attention to himself, as a possible prelude to a romp or a further walk. First, he crawled toward Gareth on his stomach, propelling himself by his flatly outstretched forelegs, his hind-legs lying out on the ground at full length behind him—a posture said to be assumed by no canine that has not a dash of bulldog in his blood.

Next, Gyp discovered a highly dramatic caterpillar, and made little rushes at it. Failing to interest Gareth thus, he set forth on a career of exploration; his objective being China; his route, the shortest.

The dirt flew broadcast. Gareth was roused from his dreams by a pawful of it cascading over his bare head. As he voiced a disgusted reproof, Gyp gave over his work of excavation and turned alertly toward the field beyond, a half-born growl in his throat.

Gareth looked out through the curtain of splayed leaves. Across the field, toward the woods, two people were sauntering. They were Rosamond Hallett—his golden Rosamunda—and Darroll.

Fast though Rosamund had said she wanted to walk, assuredly the two were not walking fast now. They were all but creeping, so slowly did they advance. Near the edge of the field—perhaps fifty yards from where the scowling Gareth lay—stood an oak tree with wide spread and low thrust limbs. Under this tree, as by common consent, they paused.

Gareth glowered forth at them from his hiding place. He laid one detaining hand on Gyp's stud-ded collar, as the Doberman showed signs of trotting out to make friends with Rosamund.

The boy felt he was doing nothing dishonorable in staying thus out of sight. He was not eavesdropping. Even if he had chosen to, he could not have heard a syllable of the talk going on. He had no wish to spy. But he had still less wish, in his present exalted mood, to go forward and join in their conversation. He wanted to be let alone; to stay unobserved. He dared not crawl back the way he had come. For, once away from the linden tent, he would be in more or less plain view; and a hail from them might force him to join in their crawling stroll. So he stayed where he was, hoping they might pass on.

They did not pass on. There they stood, under that sprawly limbed oak, just looking at each other. Darroll was speaking. His face did not wear its wonted grin. It was set and earnest—terribly earnest. So earnest was it that to Gareth it looked sullen and brutally threatening.

As for Rosamund, she was flushed and she looked thoroughly uncomfortable. Gareth read something

akin to terror in her big eyes, as she raised them in apparent pleading to the hulk of a man who loomed so high above her. She seemed to be frightened at that menacing face of his or at what he was saying.

Was it possible that Darroll—that any mortal man—was actually daring to threaten this golden girl or to make her unhappy? At the thought Gareth got to his feet—his mouth set ominously, his muscles tensed.

Then, bitterly, he realized how little chance—how less than no chance—he had of thrashing such a giant. He was an undersized lad of twelve. Saul Darroll was a six-foot athlete in the late twenties; a boxer and football man. Gareth could have wept at his own impotence. He prayed he might be mistaken in the menace he read in the giant's face and gesture.

Then back came to him the tale of the hend Sir Ghelent, who, armorless, and gripping only his true blade, had fared forth to do battle with the giant, Thor kynd, and who had rescued the golden Rosamunda from the ogre's touches. Oh, if only Gareth had a sword—any weapon at all—to hold his own against!——

His fingers clutched around the imaginary hilt and around the actual collar of his Doberman.

A weapon? Why, what mere sword was as formidable, as potentially deadly, as this forty-odd pounds of fearless wiry muscle, with its rending jaws?

At once Gareth felt himself stronger than any and every giant; from Thor kynd down (or up) to Saul Darroll. Lucky for the man under the oak tree that he had confined his threats to mere words!

But now the scene out yonder was shifting. Saul had bent over the girl, ever more and more terribly in earnest as he spoke. Now, his lips ceased moving. He had caught her by the shoulders with both his great abhorrent hands; and was waiting, his tense face close to her frightened eyes, as if for the answer to some question. Timidly, tremblingly, Rosamund's lips stirred.

The watching boy could see she breathed only a monosyllable. Yet that syllable had a truly hideous effect on the brutal giant at her side. With a hoarse sound like a cry—or a lurid curse, for all Gareth could tell—he snatched her up into his arms as if he meant to crush her to death against his mighty breast.

The moment had come—the moment for rescue—the stark moment when Sir Ghelent could save his ladye fair from the murderous brute who had seized her. The boy took his hand from Gyp's collar and pointed feverishly at Darroll.

"*Get him!*" panted Gareth.

Like a flung spear the dog hurled himself forward.

He was familiar with the command. More than once it had been given, when pig or stray dog had ventured upon the lawn. Nor was Gyp in doubt as to whom he was to attack. Rosamund was his good friend. She was roughly handled by this man whom the Doberman had never made friends with. Gyp's mission was plain.

Saul Darroll was roused with much suddenness from the ecstasy of clasping to his heart the girl who had just confessed she loved him. He was aroused by a thwacking live weight that crashed against his shoulders from behind. Hot breath was on his neck.

Two jaws clicked together as they missed his jugular by a fraction of an inch.

Again and at once the Doberman struck, as Darroll staggered against the tree. This time his teeth closed in the collar of Saul's white homespun coat; ripping the stout cloth from neck to hem. By the time his whalebone legs touched ground, he had launched himself anew at the man he had been set upon. The swift and instinctive guarding motion of Saul's right arm fended from his throat the powerful jaws that ravened at it.

The teeth set in the arm; shearing through the homespun and the silken shirt beneath; and grazing the flesh, as they met in the sleeve.

On the instant, Darroll had brought his left arm into action. By the time the Doberman could loose his futile grip, Saul had him by the nape of the neck and was holding him helplessly snarling and snapping, at arm's length.

"Oh, sweetheart!" cried Rosamund hysterically, as a tiny stain of blood from the man's scratched forearm showed on the torn sleeve. "You're hurt! Oh, you're *hurt*! Darling, I——"

That was what Gareth Ross heard as he came running forward in the wake of his messenger of vengeance.

The boy stopped stock still and stared. With one arm Darroll held the squirming and growling Doberman far out from him. With the other he had drawn Rosamund close. She bent and kissed the scratched forearm as it showed through the gaping sleeve. It was an intensely silly and ludicrous tableau. To Gareth it was incredibly awful.

Rosamund saw him, and as she sought to draw away from Saul's encompassing arm, she called:

"Oh, Gareth, Gyp has gone mad! He——"

"He isn't mad," answered Gareth heavily. "I set him on Mr. Darroll. I did it, myself. It isn't his fault. Let him down, please, Mr. Darroll. He'll be all right now. Gyp, *Here!*"

The released dog trotted over to his master at the summons; coughing from the strangle hold on his neck. At a sign from Gareth he lay down, awaiting further orders. None was given. Bravely Gareth went forward to where the two astounded lovers awaited him. The advance demanded fifty times the courage he had needed for the copperhead.

"I didn't understand," he said, his voice as steady as it was flat. "Not till I heard what she said to you just now."

He was facing the giant and speaking as man to man.

"I don't think," went on the boy, "I don't think it would do any good to say I am sorry. I *am* sorry, though. It was a—kind of mischief I suppose. You can take what the torn clothes cost from the canoe money I've saved out of my allowance. But don't be sore at Gyp. It wasn't his fault. He only did what I told him to—I think I'll go now and tell Dad about it. I may as well pay up for everything at the same time."

He did not wait for either of his dumfounded hearers to speak. Nor did he look at Rosamund. His shoulders very square and his head up, he strode homeward; Gyp with him.

Gareth lay on the study window-seat. Rosamund Hallett had left Rossacres that morning. The boy was deep again in one of the "used-to-be yarns." As before, he was amusing himself by reading aloud

to Gyp, who was stretched drowsily on the floor beside him.

“‘Right doughtily did the hend Sir Ghelent do battle that day,’” he intoned, “‘and full twoscore of the Soldan’s Paynim host felt the bite of his good sword, Balmung. But when the battle was over and past and the foe were in panic rout, then thought he softly within himself of the golden Rosamunda, his ladye fair, and——’”

Gareth yawned cavernously and laid aside the book.

“Gyp,” he demanded, “why do you suppose they always mess up these corking good fight yarns with a lot of silly love-twaddle—just at the most exciting part? It keeps spoiling the whole story.”

QUESTIONS

1. Find some information about Doberman dogs, and be prepared to tell the class about it.
2. Describe Gareth’s environment.
3. Was Gareth’s choice of reading material typical of the average boy of twelve years? Explain.
4. What brought Rosamund to Rossacres?
5. Account for the friendship between Rosamund and Gareth.
6. What was Gareth’s opinion of Saul? Saul’s opinion of Gareth?
7. Retell the incident concerning the snake.
8. Why did Gareth kill the snake himself rather than let Gyp kill it?
9. In what ways does this incident affect the plot?
10. Describe Gareth’s emotions as he witnessed the scene between Rosamund and Saul.
11. Discuss whether the portrayal of the boy or the dog is more true to life.
12. What is the main point of interest in this story?
13. Pick out some humorous passages.
14. What is “The True Romance?”

15. In what ways does a knowledge of the legends of King Arthur help you to appreciate this story?
16. Keeping as near as possible to the style used by Mr. Terhune, write your version of what Gareth told his father about the incident of Gyp's attack upon Darroll.
17. Why was this a difficult thing for Gareth to do?

XINGU

BY

EDITH WHARTON

EDITH WHARTON

(1862—)

The genius of Edith Wharton is matched by that of few living writers. She is a person of rare subtlety of intellect and wide cosmopolitan sympathies. Her background has afforded her an unusual breadth of culture.

Born in 1862, the daughter of Frederic and Lucretia Jones, and the granddaughter of General Ebenezer Stevens of Revolutionary fame, Mrs. Wharton had from her earliest days every advantage that wealth and position could give her. Private teaching, travel, and cultivated surroundings were hers.

In 1885 she married Edward Wharton, a Bostonian, and in 1890 began writing. It was at once apparent that she possessed unusual talent. The major part of her work deals with cultivated and sophisticated people, and reflects the author's discriminating tastes.

Since 1906 she has been a resident of Paris; and more than any other American writer except, perhaps, Henry James, has she been able to acclimate herself in European culture.

As a resident of Paris during the war she came in close contact with many phases of the conflict. Her book, "Fighting France," is one of the most vivid and comprehensive panoramas in our literature concerning the War. She herself was absorbed in the interests and activities excited by the War, and was moved by a patriotism for France nearly as great as if her own country had been in danger.

Some collections of short stories by Mrs. Wharton are:

Greater Inclination

Crucial Instances

The Descent of Man

Tales of Men and Ghosts

Xingu and other stories

Old New York

XINGU

I

Mrs. Ballinger is one of the ladies who pursue Culture in bands, as though it were dangerous to meet alone. To this end she had founded the Lunch Club, an association composed of herself and sev-

eral other indomitable huntresses of erudition. The Lunch Club, after three or four winters of lunching and debate, had acquired such local distinction that the entertainment of distinguished strangers became one of its accepted functions; in recognition of which it duly extended to the celebrated "Osric Dane," on the day of her arrival in Hillbridge, an invitation to be present at the next meeting.

The club was to meet at Mrs. Ballinger's. The other members, behind her back, were of one voice in deploring her unwillingness to cede her rights in favour of Mrs. Plinth, whose house made a more impressive setting for the entertainment of celebrities; while, as Mrs. Leveret observed, there was always the picture-gallery to fall back on.

Mrs. Plinth made no secret of sharing this view. She had always regarded it as one of her obligations to entertain the Lunch Club's distinguished guests. Mrs. Plinth was almost as proud of her obligations as she was of her picture-gallery; she was in fact fond of implying that the one possession implied the other, and that only a woman of her wealth could afford to live up to a standard as high as that which she had set herself. An all-round sense of duty, roughly adaptable to various ends, was, in her opinion, all that Providence exacted of the more humbly stationed; but the power which had predestined Mrs. Plinth to keep a footman clearly intended her to maintain an equally specialized staff of responsibilities. It was the more to be regretted that Mrs. Ballinger, whose obligations to society were bounded by the narrow scope of two parlour-maids, should have been so tenacious of the right to entertain Osric Dane.

The question of that lady's reception had for a

month past profoundly moved the members of the Lunch Club. It was not that they felt themselves unequal to the task, but that their sense of the opportunity plunged them into the agreeable uncertainty of the lady who weighs the alternatives of a well-stocked wardrobe. If such subsidiary members as Mrs. Leveret were fluttered by the thought of exchanging ideas with the author of "The Wings of Death," no forebodings disturbed the conscious adequacy of Mrs. Plinth, Mrs. Ballinger and Miss Van Vluyck, "The Wings of Death" had, in fact, at Miss Van Vluyck's suggestion, been chosen as the subject of discussion at the last club meeting, and each member had thus been enabled to express her own opinion or to appropriate whatever sounded well in the comments of the others.

Mrs. Roby alone had abstained from profiting by the opportunity; but it was now openly recognised that, as a member of the Lunch Club, Mrs. Roby was a failure. "It all comes," as Miss Van Vluyck put it, "of accepting a woman on a man's estimation." Mrs. Roby, returning to Hillbridge from a prolonged sojourn in exotic lands—the other ladies no longer took the trouble to remember where—had been heralded by the distinguished biologist, Professor Foreland, as the most agreeable woman he had ever met; and the members of the Lunch Club, impressed by an encomium that carried the weight of a diploma, and rashly assuming that the Professor's social sympathies would follow the line of his professional bent, had seized the chance of annexing a biological member. Their disillusionment was complete. At Miss Van Vluyck's first off-hand mention of the pterodactyl Mrs. Roby had confusedly murmured: "I know so little about me-

tres—" and after that painful betrayal of incompetence she had prudently withdrawn from farther participation in the mental gymnastics of the club.

"I suppose she flattered him," Miss Van Vluyck summed up—"or else it's the way she does her hair."

The dimensions of Miss Van Vluyck's dining-room having restricted the membership of the club to six, the non-conductiveness of one member was a serious obstacle to the exchange of ideas, and some wonder had already been expressed that Mrs. Roby should care to live, as it were, on the intellectual bounty of the others. This feeling was increased by the discovery that she had not read "The Wings of Death." She owned to having heard the name of Osric Dane; but that—incredible as it appeared—was the extent of her acquaintance with the celebrated novelist. The ladies could not conceal their surprise; but Mrs. Ballinger, whose pride in the club made her wish to put even Mrs. Roby in the best possible light, gently insinuated that, though she had not had time to acquaint herself with "The Wings of Death," she must at least be familiar with its equally remarkable predecessor, "The Supreme Instant."

Mrs. Roby wrinkled her sunny brows in a conscientious effort of memory, as a result of which she recalled that, oh, yes, she *had* seen the book at her brother's, when she was staying with him in Brazil, and had even carried it off to read one day on a boating party; but they had all got to shying things at each other in the boat, and the book had gone overboard, so she had never had the chance—

The picture evoked by this anecdote did not increase Mrs. Roby's credit with the club, and there

was a painful pause, which was broken by Mrs. Plinth's remarking: "I can understand that, with all your other pursuits, you should not find much time for reading; but I should have thought you might at least have *got up* 'The Wings of Death' before Osric Dane's arrival."

Mrs. Roby took this rebuke good-humouredly. She had meant, she owned, to glance through the book; but she had been so absorbed in a novel of Trollope's that—

"No one reads Trollope now," Mrs. Ballinger interrupted.

Mrs. Roby looked pained. "I'm only just beginning," she confessed.

"And does he interest you?" Mrs. Plinth enquired.

"He amuses me."

"Amusement," said Mrs. Plinth, "is hardly what I look for in my choice of books."

"Oh, certainly, 'The Wings of Death' is not amusing," ventured Mrs. Leveret, whose manner of putting forth an opinion was like that of an obliging salesman with a variety of other styles to submit if his first selection does not suit.

"Was it *meant* to be?" enquired Mrs. Plinth, who was fond of asking questions that she permitted no one but herself to answer. "Assuredly not."

"Assuredly not—that is what I was going to say," assented Mrs. Leveret, hastily rolling up her opinion and reaching for another. "It was meant to—to elevate."

Miss Van Vluyck adjusted her spectacles as though they were the black cap of condemnation. "I hardly see," she interposed, "how a book steeped in the bitterest pessimism can be said to elevate, however much it may instruct."

"I meant, of course, to instruct," said Mrs. Leveret, flurried by the unexpected distinction between two terms which she had supposed to be synonymous. Mrs. Leveret's enjoyment of the Lunch Club was frequently marred by such surprises; and not knowing her own value to the other ladies as a mirror for their mental complacency she was sometimes troubled by a doubt of her worthiness to join in their debates. It was only the fact of having a dull sister who thought her clever that saved her from a sense of hopeless inferiority.

"Do they get married in the end?" Mrs. Roby interposed.

"They—who?" the Lunch Club collectively exclaimed.

"Why, the girl and man. It's a novel, isn't it? I always think that's the one thing that matters. If they're parted it spoils my dinner."

Mrs. Plinth and Mrs. Ballinger exchanged scandalised glances, and the latter said: "I should hardly advise you to read 'The Wings of Death' in that spirit. For my part, when there are so many books one *has* to read, I wonder how any one can find time for those that are merely amusing."

"The beautiful part of it," Laura Glyde murmured, "is surely just this—that no one can tell *how* 'The Wings of Death' ends. Osric Dane, overcome, by the awful significance of her own meaning, has mercifully veiled it—perhaps even from herself—as Apelles, in representing the sacrifice of Iphigenia, veiled the face of Agamemnon."

"What's that? Is it poetry?" whispered Mrs. Leveret to Mrs. Plinth, who, disdaining a definite reply, said coldly: "You should look it up. I always make it a point to look things up." Her tone

added—"though I might easily have it done for me by the footman."

"I was about to say," Miss Van Vluyck resumed, "that it must always be a question whether a book *can* instruct unless it elevates."

"Oh—" murmured Mrs. Leveret, now feeling herself hopelessly astray.

"I don't know," said Mrs. Ballinger, scenting in Miss Van Vluyck's tone a tendency to depreciate the coveted distinction of entertaining Osric Dane; "I don't know that such a question can seriously be raised as to a book which has attracted more attention among thoughtful people than any novel since 'Robert Elsemere.'"

"Oh, but don't you see," exclaimed Laura Glyde, "that it's just the dark hopelessness of it all—the wonderful tone-scheme of black on black—that makes it such an artistic achievement? It reminded me when I read it of Prince Rupert's *maniere noire* . . . the book is etched, not painted, yet one feels the colour-values so intensely. . . ."

"Who is *he*?" Mrs. Leveret whispered to her neighbour. "Some one she's met abroad?"

"The wonderful part of the book," Mrs. Ballinger conceded, "is that it may be looked at from so many points of view. I hear that as a study of determinism Professor Lupton ranks it with 'The Data of Ethics.'"

"I'm told that Osric Dane spent ten years in preparatory studies before beginning to write it," said Mrs. Plinth. "She looks up everything—verifies everything. It has always been my principle, as you know. Nothing would induce me, now, to put aside a book before I'd finished it, just because I can buy as many more as I want."

"And what do *you* think of 'The Wings of Death'?" Mrs. Roby abruptly asked her.

It was the kind of question that might be termed out of order, and the ladies glanced at each other as though disclaiming any share in such a breach of discipline. They all knew there was nothing Mrs. Plinth so much disliked as being asked her opinion of a book. Books were written to read; if one read them what more could be expected? To be questioned in detail regarding the contents of a volume seemed to her as great an outrage as being searched for smuggled laces at the Custom House. The club had always respected this idiosyncrasy of Mrs. Plinth's. Such opinions as she had were imposing and substantial: her mind, like her house, was furnished with monumental "pieces" that were not meant to be disarranged; and it was one of the unwritten rules of the Lunch Club that, within her own province, each member's habits of thought should be respected. The meeting therefore closed with an increased sense, on the part of the other ladies, of Mrs. Roby's hopeless unfitness to be one of them.

II

Mrs. Leveret, on the eventful day, arrived early at Mrs. Ballinger's, her volume of "Appropriate Allusions" in her pocket.

It always flustered Mrs. Leverett to be late at the Lunch Club: she liked to collect her thoughts and gather a hint, as the others assembled, of the turn the conversation was likely to take. To-day, however, she felt herself completely at a loss; and even the familiar contact of "Appropriate Allusions," which stuck into her as she sat down, failed to give her any

reassurance. It was an admirable little volume, compiled to meet all the social emergencies; so that, whether on the occasion of Anniversaries, joyful or melancholy (as the classification ran), of Banquets, social or municipal, or of Baptisms, Church of England or sectarian, its student need never be at a loss for a pertinent reference. Mrs. Leveret, though she had for years devoutly conned its pages, valued it, however, rather for its moral support than for its practical services; for though in the privacy of her own room she commanded an army of quotations, these invariably deserted her at the critical moment, and the only phrase she retained—*Canst thou draw out levithan with a hook?*—was one she had never yet found occasion to apply.

To-day she felt that even the complete mastery of the volume would hardly have insured her self-possession; for she thought it probable that, even if she *did*, in some miraculous way, remember an Allusion, it would be only to find that Osric Dane used a different volume (Mrs. Leveret was convinced that literary people always carried them), and would consequently not recognise her quotations.

Mrs. Leveret's sense of being adrift was intensified by the appearance of Mrs. Ballinger's drawing-room. To a careless eye its aspect was unchanged; but those acquainted with Mrs. Ballinger's way of arranging her books would instantly have detected the marks of recent perturbation. Mrs. Ballinger's province, as a member of the Lunch Club, was the Book of the Day. On that, whatever it was, from a novel to a treatise on experimental psychology, she was confidently, authoritatively "up." What became of last year's books, or last week's even; what she did with the "subjects" she

had previously professed with equal authority; no one had ever yet discovered. Her mind was an hotel where facts came and went like transient lodgers, without leaving their address behind, and frequently without paying for their board. It was Mrs. Ballinger's boast that she was "abreast with the Thought of the Day," and her pride that this advanced position should be expressed by the books on her table. These volumes, frequently renewed, and almost always damp from the press, bore names generally unfamiliar to Mrs. Leveret, and giving her, as she furtively scanned them, a disheartening glimpse of new fields of knowledge to be breathlessly traversed in Mrs. Ballinger's wake. But to-day a number of maturer-looking volumes were adroitly mingled with the *primeurs* of the press—Karl Marx jostled Professor Bergson, and the "Confessions of St. Augustine" lay beside the last work on "Mendelism"; so that even to Mrs. Leveret's fluttered perceptions it was clear that Mrs. Ballinger didn't in the least know what Osric Dane was likely to talk about, and had taken measures to be prepared for anything. Mrs. Leveret felt like a passenger on an ocean steamer who is told that there is no immediate danger, but that she had better put on her life-belt.

It was a relief to be roused from these forebodings by Miss Van Vluyck's arrival.

"Well, my dear," the new-comer briskly asked her hostess, "what subjects are we to discuss to-day?"

Mrs. Ballinger was furtively replacing a volume of Wordsworth by a copy of Verlaine. "I hardly know," she said, somewhat nervously. "Perhaps we had better leave that to circumstances."

"Circumstances?" said Miss Van Vluyck drily. "That means, I suppose, that Laura Glyde will take

the floor as usual, and we shall be deluged with literature."

Philanthropy and statistics were Miss Van Vluyck's province, and she resented any tendency to divert their guest's attention from these topics.

Mrs. Plinth at this moment appeared.

"Literature?" she protested in a tone of remonstrance. "But this is perfectly unexpected. I understood we were to talk of Osric Dane's novel."

Mrs. Ballinger winced at the discrimination, but let it pass. "We can hardly make that our chief subject—at least not *too* intentionally," she suggested. "Of course we can let our talk *drift* in that direction; but we ought to have some other topic as an introduction, and that is what I wanted to consult you about. The fact is, we know so little of Osric Dane's tastes and interests that it is difficult to make any special preparation."

"It may be difficult," said Mrs. Plinth with decision, "but it is necessary. I know what that happy-go-lucky principle leads to. As I told one of my nieces the other day, there are certain emergencies for which a lady should always be prepared. It's in shocking taste to wear colours when one pays a visit of condolence, or a last year's dress when there are reports that one's husband is on the wrong side of the market; and so it is with conversation. All I ask is that I should know beforehand what is to be talked about; then I feel sure of being able to say the proper thing."

"I quite agree with you," Mrs. Ballinger assented; "but—"

And at that instant, heralded by the fluttered parlour-maid, Osric Dane appeared upon the threshold.

Mrs. Leveret told her sister afterward that she

had known at a glance what was coming. She saw that Osric Dane was not going to meet them half way. That distinguished personage had indeed entered with an air of compulsion not calculated to promote the easy exercise of hospitality. She looked as though she were about to be photographed for a new edition of her books.

The desire to propitiate a divinity is generally in inverse ratio to its responsiveness, and the sense of discouragement produced by Osric Dane's entrance visibly increased the Lunch Club's eagerness to please her. Any lingering idea that she might consider herself under an obligation to her entertainers was at once dispelled by her manner: as Mrs. Leveret said afterward to her sister, she had a way of looking at you that made you feel as if there was something wrong with your hat. This evidence of greatness produced such an immediate impression on the ladies that a shudder of awe ran through them when Mrs. Roby, as their hostess led the great personage into the dining-room, turned back to whisper to the others: "What a brute she is!"

The hour about the table did not tend to revise this verdict. It was passed by Osric Dane in the silent deglutition of Mrs. Ballinger's menu, and by the members of the club in the emission of tentative platitudes which their guest seemed to swallow as perfunctorily as the successive courses of the luncheon.

Mrs. Ballinger's reluctance to fix a topic had thrown the club into a mental disarray which increased with the return to the drawing-room, where the actual business of discussion was to open. Each lady waited for the other to speak; and there was a general shock of disappointment when their hostess

opened the conversation by the painfully commonplace enquiry: "Is this your first visit to Hillbridge?"

Even Mrs. Leveret was conscious that this was a bad beginning; and a vague impulse of deprecation made Miss Glyde interject: "It is a very small place indeed."

Mrs. Plinth bristled. "We have a great many representative people," she said, in the tone of one who speaks for her order.

Osric Dane turned to her. "What do they represent?" she asked.

Mrs. Plinth's constitutional dislike to being questioned was intensified by her sense of unpreparedness; and her reproachful glance passed the question on to Mrs. Ballinger.

"Why," said that lady, glancing in turn at the other members, "as a community I hope it is not too much to say that we stand for culture."

"For art—" Miss Glyde interjected.

"For art and literature," Mrs. Ballinger emended.

"And for sociology, I trust," snapped Miss Van Vluyck.

"We have a standard," said Mrs. Plinth, feeling herself suddenly secure on the vast expanse of a generalisation; and Mrs. Leveret, thinking there must be room for more than one on so broad a statement, took courage to murmur: "Oh, certainly; we have a standard."

"The object of our little club," Mrs. Ballinger continued, "is to concentrate the highest tendencies of Hillbridge—to centralise and focus its intellectual effort."

This was felt to be so happy that the ladies drew an almost audible breath of relief.

"We aspire," the President went on, "to be in

touch with whatever is highest in art, literature and ethics."

Osric Dane again turned to her. "What ethics?" she asked.

A tremor of apprehension encircled the room. None of the ladies required any preparation to pronounce on a question of morals; but when they were called ethics it was different. The club, when fresh from the "Encyclopædia Britannica," the "Reader's Handbook" or Smith's "Classical Dictionary," could deal confidently with any subject; but when taken unawares it had been known to define agnosticism as a heresy of the Early Church and Professor Froude as a distinguished histologist; and such minor members as Mrs. Leveret still secretly regarded ethics as something vaguely pagan.

Even to Mrs. Ballinger, Osric Dane's question was unsettling, and there was a general sense of gratitude when Laura Glyde leaned forward to say, with her most sympathetic accent: "You must excuse us, Mrs. Dane, for not being able, just at present, to talk of anything but 'The Wings of Death.'"

"Yes," said Miss Van Vluyck, with a sudden resolve to carry the war into the enemy's camp. "We are so anxious to know the exact purpose you had in mind in writing your wonderful book."

"You will find," Mrs. Plinth interposed, "that we are not superficial readers."

"We are eager to hear from you," Miss Van Vluyck continued, "if the pessimistic tendency of the book is an expression of your own convictions or——"

"Or merely," Miss Glyde thrust in, "a sombre background brushed in to throw your figures into more vivid relief. *Are you not primarily plastic?*"

"I have always maintained," Mrs. Ballinger interposed, "that you represent the purely objective method——"

Osric Dane helped herself critically to coffee. "How do you define objective?" she then enquired.

There was a flurried pause before Laura Glyde intensely murmured: "In reading *you* we don't define, we feel."

Osric Dane smiled. "The cerebellum," she remarked, "is not infrequently the seat of the literary emotions." And she took a second lump of sugar.

The sting that this remark was vaguely felt to conceal was almost neutralised by the satisfaction of being addressed in such technical language.

"Ah, the cerebellum," said Miss Van Vluyck complacently. "The club took a course in psychology last winter."

"Which psychology?" asked Osric Dane.

There was an agonising pause, during which each member of the club secretly deplored the distressing inefficiency of the others. Only Mrs. Roby went on placidly sipping her chartreuse. At last Mrs. Ballinger said, with an attempt at a high tone: "Well, really, you know, it was last year that we took psychology, and this winter we have been so absorbed in——"

She broke off, nervously trying to recall some of the club's discussions; but her faculties seemed to be paralysed by the petrifying stare of Osric Dane. What *had* the club been absorbed in? Mrs. Ballinger, with a vague purpose of gaining time, repeated slowly: "We've been so intensely absorbed in——"

Mrs. Roby put down her liqueur glass and drew near the group with a smile.

"In Xingu?" she gently prompted.

A thrill ran through the other members. They exchanged confused glances, and then, with one accord, turned a gaze of mingled relief and interrogation on their rescuer. The expression of each denoted a different phase of the same emotion. Mrs. Plinth was the first to compose her features to an air of reassurance: after a moment's hasty adjustment her look almost implied that it was she who had given the word to Mrs. Ballinger.

"Xingu, of course!" exclaimed the latter with her accustomed promptness, while Miss Van Vluyck and Laura Glyde seemed to be plumbing the depths of memory, and Mrs. Leveret, feeling apprehensively for "Appropriate Allusions," was somehow reassured by the uncomfortable pressure of its bulk against her person.

Osric Dane's change of countenance was no less striking than that of her entertainers. She too put down her coffee-cup, but with a look of distinct annoyance; she too wore, for a brief moment, what Mrs. Roby afterward described as the look of feeling for something in the back of her head; and before she could dissemble these momentary signs of weakness, Mrs. Roby, turning to her with a deferential smile, had said: "And we've been so hoping that to-day you would tell us just what you think of it."

Osric Dane received the homage of the smile as a matter of course; but the accompanying question obviously embarrassed her, and it became clear to her observers that she was not quick at shifting her facial scenery. It was as though her countenance had so long been set in an expression of unchallenged superiority that the muscles had stiffened, and refused to obey her orders.

"Xingu—" she said, as if seeking in her turn to gain time.

Mrs. Roby continued to press her. "Knowing how engrossing the subject is, you will understand how it happens that the club has let everything else go to the wall for the moment. Since we took up Xingu I might almost say—were it not for your books—that nothing else seems to us worth remembering."

Osric Dane's stern features were darkened rather than lit up by an uneasy smile. "I am glad to hear that you make one exception," she gave out between narrowed lips.

"Oh, of course," Mrs. Roby said prettily; "but as you have shown us that—so very naturally!—you don't care to talk of your own things, we really can't let you off from telling us exactly what you think about Xingu; especially," she added, with a still more persuasive smile, "as some people say that one of your last books was saturated with it."

It was an *it*, then—the assurance sped like fire through the parched minds of the other members. In their eagerness to gain the least little clue to Xingu they almost forgot the joy of assisting at the discomfiture of Mrs. Dane.

The latter reddened nervously under her antagonist's challenge. "May I ask," she faltered out, "to which of my books you refer?"

Mrs. Roby did not falter. "That's just what I want you to tell us; because, though I was present, I didn't actually take part."

"Present at what?" Mrs. Dane took her up; and for an instant the trembling members of the Lunch Club thought that the champion Providence had raised up for them had lost a point. But Mrs. Roby

explained herself gaily: "At the discussion, of course. And so we're dreadfully anxious to know just how it was that you went into the Xingu."

There was a portentous pause, a silence so big with incalculable dangers that the members with one accord checked the words on their lips, like soldiers dropping their arms to watch a single combat between their leaders. Then Mrs. Dane gave expression to their inmost dread by saying sharply: "Ah—you say *the* Xingu, do you?"

Mrs. Roby smiled undauntedly. "It *is* a shade pedantic, isn't it? Personally, I always drop the article; but I don't know how the other members feel about it."

The other members looked as though they would willingly have dispensed with this appeal to their opinion, and Mrs. Roby, after a bright glance about the group, went on: "They probably think, as I do, that nothing really matters except the thing itself—except Xingu."

No immediate reply seemed to occur to Mrs. Dane, and Mrs. Ballinger gathered courage to say: "Surely every one must feel that about Xingu."

Mrs. Plinth came to her support with a heavy murmur of assent, and Laura Glyde sighed out emotionally: "I have known cases where it has changed a whole life."

"It has done me worlds of good," Mrs. Leveret interjected, seeming to herself to remember that she had either taken it or read it the winter before.

"Of course," Mrs. Roby admitted, "the difficulty is that one must give up so much time to it. It's very long."

"I can't imagine," said Miss Van Vluyck, "grudging the time given to such a subject."

"And deep in places," Mrs. Roby pursued; (so then it was a book!). "And it isn't easy to skip."

"I never skip," said Mrs. Plinth dogmatically.

"Ah, it's dangerous to, in Xingu. Even at the start there are places where one can't. One must just wade through."

"I should hardly call it *wading*," said Mrs. Ballinger sarcastically.

Mrs. Roby sent her a look of interest. "Ah—you always found it went swimmingly?"

Mrs. Ballinger hesitated. "Of course there are difficult passages," she conceded.

"Yes; some are not at all clear—even," Mrs. Roby added, "if one is familiar with the original."

"As I suppose you are?" Osric Dane interposed, suddenly fixing her with a look of challenge.

Mrs. Roby met it by a deprecating gesture. "Oh, it's really not difficult up to a certain point; though some of the branches are very little known, and it's almost impossible to get at the source."

"Have you ever tried?" Mrs. Plinth enquired, still distrustful of Mrs. Roby's thoroughness.

Mrs. Roby was silent for a moment; then she replied with lowered lids: "No—but a friend of mine did; a very brilliant man; and he told me it was best for women—not to. . . ."

A shudder ran around the room. Mrs. Leveret coughed so that the parlour-maid, who was handing the cigarettes, should not hear; Miss Van Vluyck's face took on a nauseated expression, and Mrs. Plinth looked as if she were passing some one she did not care to bow to. But the most remarkable result of Mrs. Roby's words was the effect they produced on the Lunch Club's distinguished guest. Osric Dane's impassive features suddenly softened to an expres-

sion of the warmest human sympathy, and edging her chair toward Mrs. Roby's she asked: "Did he really? And—did you find he was right?"

Mrs. Ballinger, in whom annoyance at Mrs. Roby's unwonted assumption of prominence was beginning to displace gratitude for the aid she had rendered, could not consent to her being allowed, by such dubious means, to monopolise the attention of their guest. If Osric Dane had not enough self-respect to resent Mrs. Roby's flippancy, at least the Lunch Club would do so in the person of its President.

Mrs. Ballinger laid her hand on Mrs. Roby's arm. "We must not forget," she said with a frigid amiability, "that absorbing as Xingu is to *us*, it may be less interesting to——"

"Oh, no, on the contrary, I assure you," Osric Dane intervened.

"—to others," Mrs. Ballinger finished firmly; "and we must not allow our little meeting to end without persuading Mrs. Dane to say a few words to us on a subject which, to-day, is much more present in all our thoughts. I refer, of course, to 'The Wings of Death.'"

The other members, animated by various degrees of the same sentiment, and encouraged by the humanised mien of their redoubtable guest, repeated after Mrs. Ballinger: "Oh, yes, you really *must* talk to us a little about your book."

Osric Dane's expression became as bored, though not as haughty, as when her work had been previously mentioned. But before she could respond to Mrs. Ballinger's request, Mrs. Roby had risen from her seat, and was pulling down her veil over her frivolous nose.

"I'm so sorry," she said, advancing toward her hostess with outstretched hand, "but before Mrs. Dane begins I think I'd better run away. Unluckily, as you know, I haven't read her books, so I should be at a terrible disadvantage among you all, and besides, I've an engagement to play bridge."

If Mrs. Roby had simply pleaded her ignorance of Osric Dane's works as a reason for withdrawing, the Lunch Club, in view of her recent prowess, might have approved such evidence of discretion; but to couple this excuse with the brazen announcement that she was foregoing the privilege for the purpose of joining a bridge-party was only one more instance of her deplorable lack of discrimination.

The ladies were disposed, however, to feel that her departure—now that she had performed the sole service she was ever likely to render them—would probably make for greater order and dignity in the impending discussion, besides relieving them of the sense of self-distrust which her presence always mysteriously produced. Mrs. Ballinger therefore restricted herself to a formal murmur of regret, and the other members were just grouping themselves comfortably about Osric Dane when the latter, to their dismay, started up from the sofa on which she had been seated.

"Oh wait—do wait, and I'll go with you!" she called out to Mrs. Roby; and, seizing the hands of the disconcerted members, she administered a series of farewell pressures with the mechanical haste of a railway-conductor punching tickets.

"I'm so sorry—I'd quite forgotten—" she flung back at them from the threshold; and as she joined Mrs. Roby, who had turned in surprise at her appeal, the other ladies had the mortification of hear-

ing her say, in a voice which she did not take the pains to lower: "If you'll let me walk a little way with you, I should so like to ask you a few more questions about Xingu. . . ."

III

The incident had been so rapid that the door closed on the departing pair before the other members had time to understand what was happening. Then a sense of the indignity put upon them by Osric Dane's unceremonious desertion began to contend with the confused feeling that they had been cheated out of their due without exactly knowing how or why.

There was a silence, during which Mrs. Ballinger, with a perfunctory hand, rearranged the skilfully grouped literature at which her distinguished guest had not so much as glanced; then Miss Van Vluyck tartly pronounced: "Well, I can't say that I consider Osric Dane's departure a great loss."

This confession crystallised the resentment of the other members, and Mrs. Leveret exclaimed: "I do believe she came on purpose to be nasty!"

It was Mrs. Plinth's private opinion that Osric Dane's attitude toward the Lunch Club might have been very different had it welcomed her in the majestic setting of the Plinth drawing-rooms; but not liking to reflect on the inadequacy of Mrs. Ballinger's establishment she sought a roundabout satisfaction in deprecating her lack of foresight.

"I said from the first that we ought to have had a subject ready. It's what always happens when you're unprepared. Now if we'd only got up Xingu——"

The slowness of Mrs. Plinth's mental processes was always allowed for by the club; but this instance of it was too much for Mrs. Ballinger's equanimity.

"Xingu!" she scoffed. "Why, it was the fact of our knowing so much more about it than she did—unprepared though we were—that made Osric Dane so furious. I should have thought that was plain enough to everybody!"

This retort impressed even Mrs. Plinth, and Laura Glyde, moved by an impulse of generosity, said: "Yes, we really ought to be grateful to Mrs. Roby for introducing the topic. It may have made Osric Dane furious, but at least it made her civil."

"I am glad we were able to show her," added Miss Van Vluyck, "that a broad and up-to-date culture is not confined to the great intellectual centres."

This increased the satisfaction of the other members, and they began to forget their wrath against Osric Dane in the pleasure of having contributed to her discomfiture.

Miss Van Vluyck thoughtfully rubbed her spectacles. "What surprised me most," she continued. "was that Fanny Roby should be so up on Xingu."

This remark threw a slight chill on the company, but Mrs. Ballinger said with an air of indulgent irony: "Mrs. Roby always has the knack of making a little go a long way; still, we certainly owe her a debt for happening to remember that she'd heard of Xingu." And this was felt by the other members to be a graceful way of cancelling once for all the club's obligation to Mrs. Roby.

Even Mrs. Leveret took courage to speed a timid shaft of irony. "I fancy Osric Dane hardly expected to take a lesson in Xingu at Hillbridge!"

Mrs. Ballinger smiled. "When she asked me what we represented—do you remember?—I wish I'd simply said we represented Xingu!"

All the ladies laughed appreciatively at this sally, except Mrs. Plinth, who said, after a moment's deliberation: "I'm not sure it would have been wise to do so."

Mrs. Ballinger, who was already beginning to feel as if she had launched at Osric Dane the retort which had just occurred to her, turned ironically on Mrs. Plinth. "May I ask why?" she enquired.

Mrs. Plinth looked grave. "Surely," she said, "I understood from Mrs. Roby herself that the subject was one it was as well not to go into too deeply?"

Miss Van Vluyck rejoined with precision: "I think that applied only to an investigation of the origin of the—of the—"; and suddenly she found that her usually accurate memory had failed her. "It's a part of the subject I never studied myself," she concluded.

"Nor I," said Mrs. Ballinger.

Laura Glyde bent toward them with widened eyes. "And yet it seems—doesn't it?—the part that is fullest of an esoteric fascination?"

"I don't know on what you base that," said Miss Van Vluyck argumentatively.

"Well, didn't you notice how intensely interested Osric Dane became as soon as she heard what the brilliant foreigner—he *was* a foreigner, wasn't he? had told Mrs. Roby about the origin—the origin of the rite—or whatever you call it?"

Mrs. Plinth looked disapproving, and Mrs. Ballinger visibly wavered. Then she said: "It may not be desirable to touch on the—on that part of the subject in general conversation; but, from the im-

portance it evidently has to a woman of Osric Dane's distinction, I feel as if we ought not to be afraid to discuss it among ourselves—without gloves—though with closed doors, if necessary.”

“I’m quite of your opinion,” Miss Van Vluyck came briskly to her support; “on condition, that is, that all grossness of language is avoided.”

“Oh, I’m sure we shall understand without that,” Mrs. Leveret tittered; and Laura Glyde added significantly: “I fancy we can read between the lines,” while Mrs. Ballinger rose to assure herself that the doors were really closed.

Mrs. Plinth had not yet given her adhesion. “I hardly see,” she began, “what benefit is to be derived from investigating such peculiar customs——”

But Mrs. Ballinger’s patience had reached the extreme limit of tension. “This at least,” she returned; “that we shall not be placed again in the humiliating position of finding ourselves less up on our own subjects than Fanny Roby!”

Even to Mrs. Plinth this argument was conclusive. She peered furtively about the room and lowered her commanding tones to ask: “Have you got a copy?”

“A—a copy?” stammered Mrs. Ballinger. She was aware that the other members were looking at her expectantly, and that this answer was inadequate, so she supported it by asking another question. “A copy of what?”

Her companions bent their expectant gaze on Mrs. Plinth, who, in turn, appeared less sure of herself than usual. “Why, of—of—the book,” she explained.

“What book?” snapped Miss Van Vluyck, almost as sharply as Osric Dane.

Mrs. Ballinger looked at Laura Glyde, whose eyes were interrogatively fixed on Mrs. Leveret. The fact of being deferred to was so new to the latter that it filled her with an insane temerity. "Why, Xingu, of course!" she exclaimed.

A profound silence followed this challenge to the resources of Mrs. Ballinger's library, and the latter, after glancing nervously toward the Books of the Day, returned with dignity: "It's not a thing one cares to leave about."

"I should think *not!*" exclaimed Mrs. Plinth.

"It *is* a book, then?" said Miss Van Vluyck.

This again threw the company into disarray, and Mrs. Ballinger, with an impatient sigh, rejoined: "Why—there *is* a book—naturally. . . ."

"Then why did Miss Glyde call it a religion?"

Laura Glyde started up. "A religion? I never——"

"Yes, you did," Miss Van Vluyck insisted; "you spoke of rites; and Mrs. Plinth said it was a custom."

Miss Glyde was evidently making a desperate effort to recall her statement; but accuracy of detail was not her strongest point. At length she began in a deep murmur: "Surely they used to do something of the kind at the Eleusinian mysteries——"

"Oh——" said Miss Van Vluyck, on the verge of disapproval; and Mrs. Plinth protested: "I understood there was to be no indelicacy."

Mrs. Ballinger could not control her irritation. "Really, it is too bad that we should not be able to talk the matter over quietly among ourselves. Personally, I think that if one goes into Xingu at all——"

"Oh, so do I!" cried Miss Glyde.

"And I don't see how one can avoid doing so, if one wishes to keep up with the Thought of the Day——"

Mrs. Leveret uttered an exclamation of relief. "There—that's it!" she interposed.

"What's it?" the President took her up.

"Why—it's a—a Thought: I mean a philosophy."

This seemed to bring a certain relief to Mrs. Ballinger and Laura Glyde, but Miss Van Vluyck said: "Excuse me if I tell you that you're all mistaken. Xingu happens to be a language."

"A language!" the Lunch Club cried.

"Certainly. Don't you remember Fanny Rody's saying that there were several branches, and that some were hard to trace? What could that apply to but dialects?"

Mrs. Ballinger could no longer restrain a contemptuous laugh. "Really, if the Lunch Club has reached such a pass that it has to go to Fanny Roby for instruction on a subject like Xingu, it had almost better cease to exist!"

"It's really her fault for not being clearer," Laura Glyde put in.

"Oh, clearness and Fanny Roby!" Mrs. Ballinger shrugged. "I daresay we shall find she was mistaken on almost every point."

"Why not look it up?" said Mrs. Plinth.

As a rule this recurrent suggestion of Mrs. Plinth's was ignored in the heat of discussion, and only resorted to afterward in the privacy of each member's home. But on the present occasion the desire to ascribe their own confusion of thought to the vague and contradictory nature of Mrs. Roby's statements caused the members of the Lunch Club to utter a collective demand for a book of reference.

At this point the production of her treasured volume gave Mrs. Leveret, for a moment, the unusual experience of occupying the centre front; but she was not able to hold it long, for "Appropriate Allusions" contained no mention of Xingu.

"Oh, that's not the kind of thing we want!" exclaimed Miss Van Vluyck. She cast a disparaging glance over Mrs. Ballinger's assortment of literature, and added impatiently: "Haven't you any useful books?"

"Of course I have," replied Mrs. Ballinger indignantly; "I keep them in my husband's dressing-room."

From this region, after some difficulty and delay, the parlour-maid produced the W-Z volume of an Encyclopædia and, in deference to the fact that the demand for it had come from Miss Van Vluyck, laid the ponderous tome before her.

There was a moment of painful suspense while Miss Van Vluyck rubbed her spectacles, adjusted them, and turned to Z; and a murmur of surprise when she said: "It isn't here."

"I suppose," said Mrs. Plinth, "it's not fit to be put in a book of reference."

"Oh, nonsense!" exclaimed Mrs. Ballinger. "Try X."

Miss Van Vluyck turned back through the volume, peering short-sightedly up and down the pages, till she came to a stop and remained motionless, like a dog on a point.

"Well, have you found it?" Mrs. Ballinger enquired after a considerable delay.

"Yes. I've found it," said Miss Van Vluyck in a queer voice.

Mrs. Plinth hastily interposed: "I beg you won't read it aloud if there's anything offensive."

Miss Van Vluyck, without answering, continued her silent scrutiny.

"Well, what *is* it?" exclaimed Laura Glyde excitedly.

"*Do* tell us!" urged Mrs. Leveret, feeling that she would have something awful to tell her sister.

Miss Van Vluyck pushed the volume aside and turned slowly toward the expectant group.

"It's a river."

"A *river*?"

"Yes: in Brazil. Isn't that where she's been living?"

"Who? Fanny Roby? Oh, but you must be mistaken. You've been reading the wrong thing," Mrs. Ballinger exclaimed, leaning over her to seize the volume.

"It's the only *Xingu* in the Encyclopædia; and she *has* been living in Brazil," Miss Van Vluyck persisted.

"Yes: her brother has a consulship there," Mrs. Leveret interposed.

"But it's too ridiculous! I—we—why we *all* remember studying *Xingu* last year—or the year before last," Mrs. Ballinger stammered.

"I thought I did when *you* said so," Laura Glyde avowed.

"*I* said so?" cried Mrs. Ballinger.

"Yes. You said it had crowded everything else out of your mind."

"Well, *you* said it had changed your whole life!"

"For that matter, Miss Van Vluyck said she had never grudged the time she'd given it."

Mrs. Plinth interposed: "I made it clear that I knew nothing whatever of the original."

Mrs. Ballinger broke off the dispute with a groan.

"Oh, what does it all matter if she's been making fools of us? I believe Miss Van Vluyck's right—she was talking of the river all the while!"

"How could she? It's too preposterous," Miss Glyde exclaimed.

"Listen." Miss Van Vluyck had repossessed herself of the Encyclopædia, and restored her spectacles to a nose reddened by excitement. "'The Xingu, one of the principal rivers of Brazil, rises on the plateau of Mato Grosso, and flows in a northerly direction for a length of no less than one thousand one hundred and eighteen miles, entering the Amazon near the mouth of the latter river. The upper course of the Xingu is auriferous and fed by numerous branches. Its source was first discovered in 1884 by the German explorer von den Steinen, after a difficult and dangerous expedition through a region inhabited by tribes still in the Stone Age of culture.'"

The ladies received this communication in a state of stupefied silence from which Mrs. Leveret was the first to rally. "She certainly *did* speak of its having branches."

The word seemed to snap the last thread of their incredulity. "And of its great length," gasped Mrs. Ballinger.

"She said it was awfully deep, and you couldn't skip—you just had to wade through," Miss Glyde added.

The idea worked its way more slowly through Mrs. Plinth's compact resistances. "How could there be anything improper about a river?" she enquired.

"Improper?"

"Why, what she said about the source—that it was corrupt?"

"Not corrupt, but hard to get at," Laura Glyde corrected. "Some one who'd been there had told her so. I daresay it was the explorer himself—doesn't it say the expedition was dangerous?"

"'Difficult and dangerous,'" read Miss Van Vluyck.

Mrs. Ballinger pressed her hands to her throbbing temples. "There's nothing she said that wouldn't apply to a river—to this river!" She swung about excitedly to the other members. "Why, do you remember her telling us that she hadn't read 'The Supreme Instant' because she'd taken it on a boating party while she was staying with her brother, and some one had 'shied' it overboard—'shied' of course was her own expression."

The ladies breathlessly signified that the expression had not escaped them.

"Well—and then didn't she tell Osric Dane that one of her books was simply saturated with Xingu? Of course it was, if one of Mrs. Roby's rowdy friends had thrown it into the river!"

This surprising reconstruction of the scene in which they had just participated left the members of the Lunch Club inarticulate. At length, Mrs. Plinth, after visibly labouring with the problem, said in a heavy tone: "Osric Dane was taken in too."

Mrs. Leveret took courage at this. "Perhaps that's what Mrs. Roby did it for. She said Osric Dane was a brute, and she may have wanted to give her a lesson."

Miss Van Vluyck frowned. "It was hardly worth while to do it at our expense."

"At least," said Miss Glyde with a touch of bitterness, "she succeeded in interesting her, which was more than we did."

"What chance had we?" rejoined Mrs. Ballinger. "Mrs. Roby monopolised her from the first. And *that*, I've no doubt, was her purpose—to give Osric Dane a false impression of her own standing in the club. She would hesitate at nothing to attract attention: we all know how she took in poor Professor Foreland."

"She actually makes him give bridge-teas every Thursday," Mrs. Leveret piped up.

Laura Glyde struck her hands together. "Why, this is Thursday, and it's *there* she's gone, of course; and taken Osric with her!"

"And they're shrieking over us at this moment," said Mrs. Ballinger between her teeth.

This possibility seemed too preposterous to be admitted. "She would hardly dare," said Miss Van Vluyck, "confess the imposture to Osric Dane."

"I'm not so sure: I thought I saw her make a sign as she left. If she hadn't made a sign, why should Osric Dane have rushed out after her?"

"Well, you know, we'd all been telling her how wonderful Xingu was, and she said she wanted to find out more about it," Mrs. Leveret said, with a tardy impulse of justice to the absent.

This reminder, far from mitigating the wrath of the other members, gave it a stronger impetus.

"Yes—and that's exactly what they're both laughing over now," said Laura Glyde ironically.

Mrs. Plinth stood up and gathered her expensive furs about her monumental form. "I have no wish to criticise," she said; "but unless the Lunch Club can protect its members against the recurrence of such—such unbecoming scenes, I for one——"

"Oh, so do I!" agreed Miss Glyde, rising also.

Miss Van Vluyck closed the Encyclopædia and

proceeded to button herself into her jacket. "My time is really too valuable—" she began.

"I fancy we are all of one mind," said Mrs. Ballinger, looking searchingly at Mrs. Leveret, who looked at the others.

"I always deprecate anything like a scandal—" Mrs. Plinth continued.

"She has been the cause of one to-day!" exclaimed Miss Glyde.

Mrs. Leveret moaned: "I don't see how she *could!*" and Miss Van Vluyck said, picking up her note-book: "Some women stop at nothing."

"—but if," Mrs. Plinth took up her argument impressively, "anything of the kind had happened in *my* house" (it never would have, her tone implied), "I should have felt that I owed it to myself either to ask for Mrs. Roby's resignation—or to offer mine."

"Oh, Mrs. Plinth—" gasped the Lunch Club.

"Fortunately for me," Mrs. Plinth continued with an awful magnanimity, "the matter was taken out of my hands by our President's decision that the right to entertain distinguished guests was a privilege vested in her office; and I think the other members will agree that, as she was alone in this opinion, she ought to be alone in deciding on the best way of effacing its—its really deplorable consequences."

A deep silence followed this outbreak of Mrs. Plinth's long-stored resentment.

"I don't see why *I* should be expected to ask her to resign—" Mrs. Ballinger at length began; but Laura Glyde turned back to remind her: "You know she made you say that you'd got on swimmingly in Xingu."

An ill-timed giggle escaped from Mrs. Leveret,

and Mrs. Ballinger energetically continued “—but you needn’t think for a moment that I’m afraid to!”

The door of the drawing-room closed on the retreating backs of the Lunch Club, and the President of that distinguished association, seating herself at her writing-table, and pushing away a copy of “The Wings of Death” to make room for her elbow, drew forth a sheet of the club’s note-paper, on which she began to write: “My dear Mrs. Roby——”

QUESTIONS

1. What was the Lunch Club? How did it come to be organized?
2. Why did it rest with the Lunch Club to entertain Osrice Dane on her visit to Hillbridge?
3. How was Mrs. Ballinger’s determination to entertain the guest received by the other members of the Club?
4. What were their arguments in favor of Mrs. Plinth, as hostess?
5. How did the Club prepare itself for the meeting with Osrice Dane?
6. Why did Mrs. Roby alone make no preparation?
7. How did Mrs. Roby happen to be a member of the Club?
8. What is her standing in the Club?
9. Describe in a few carefully selected words every member of the Club. How do you think this Club compares with other Literary Clubs of a like nature?
10. What problem confronted the Club in entertaining Osrice Dane?
11. What type of person did Osrice Dane prove to be?
12. How did her conduct affect the Club members?
13. Under what difficulties did the conversation proceed?
14. At what point did Mrs. Roby introduce the topic of Xingu?
15. Describe the effect of its introduction.
16. Show that every subsequent reference by Mrs. Roby was applicable.
17. Tell how each member shows herself to be misled.
18. How did Osrice Dane react to this topic of conversation?
19. What was Mrs. Roby’s motive in introducing the subject?

20. What was her excuse for leaving? How was it received by the Club?
21. What made Osric Dane accompany Mrs. Roby?
22. Describe the meeting after the departure of Mrs. Dane and Mrs. Roby.
23. What do you believe Mrs. Roby and Mrs. Dane talked about after leaving the meeting?
24. Finish the letter which Mrs. Ballinger started.

SNAKE DOCTOR

BY

IRVIN S. COBB

IRVIN S. COBB

(1876-)

Irvin S. Cobb was born in 1876 in Paducah, Kentucky, where he attended the public schools. At the age of sixteen, as he was about to enter military school, preparatory to college, financial troubles in his family made it necessary for him to abandon the idea of further schooling and seek to earn his own living. A position as reporter on the staff of the Paducah local newspaper was offered him and he accepted, feeling, even then, that writing was the one thing in which he was most interested.

Mr. Cobb remained in newspaper work for a period of over twenty years. The material for his first story was secured when, as a reporter, he covered a Federal Court trial. The court scene in this story, "The Escape of Mr. Trimm," was so true to life that a Supreme Court judge signed a statement to the effect that Mr. Cobb had reported with marvellous accuracy a murder trial at which His Honor had presided. "The Escape of Mr. Trimm" was published by the *Saturday Evening Post*. Its success gave Mr. Cobb the necessary encouragement to forsake newspaper work and devote his time to fiction.

All of Irvin S. Cobb's literary work has been well received. He is a humorist of the first rank and his horror stories have won him still further recognition. More than one hundred and fifty short stories have come from his pen.

The titles of a few of his stories follow:

Alas the Poor Whiffletit!

Sergeant Jimmy Bagby's Feet

The Cater-Cornered Sex

Chocolate Hyena

A Judgment Come to Daniel

Nobody Sees the Waiter's Face

Otherwise Sweet William

SNAKE DOCTOR

In the North they call them Devil's darning needles. But in the South they are snake doctors, and for a reason. These harmless and decorative dragon flies with their slim, arrow-like bodies, their quick darting flight and their filmy wings, as though the arrows had been flecked with bits of drawn lace, are clothed down there with a curious fetish. When

a cotton-mouth is sick—and if his feelings match his disposition he must be sick most of the time—the snake doctor comes hurrying to him with the medication for what ails him. Perhaps seventy-five or a hundred years ago some slave newly in from Africa saw a cotton-mouth moccasin sunning its flat, heart-shaped head on top of the yellow creek water, and along the creek came flashing one of these swift creatures seeking a perch upon which to leave its eggs, and the black man saw it suddenly check and hover and stand at poise in the air an inch above the snake's still head, and from that figured this strange bug was a voodoo bug, ministering to the ailing reptile. In such a matter any man's theory is as good as the next one's. The provable thing is that a good many of the whites and more than a good many of the Negroes believe in the fable for a fact; and nearly all of them, regardless of colour, know the libelled insect as snake doctor.

Now, one of the men I have intent to write about here was known as Snake Doctor, too; and for this, also, there were reasons. To begin with, he was very long and thin, a mere rack of bones held together under the casing of a taut yellow skin; and he had popped, staring eyes, and was amazingly fast in his bodily movements. See him slipping through the willows, so furtive and quick and diffident, with his inadequately small head, his sloped shoulders, his erratic side-steppings this way or that, and inevitably you were reminded thereby of his namesake. To top the analogy, he lived right among the moccasins, taking no harm from them and having no fear of them, seemingly.

Along Cashier Creek, where they thrive in a wicked abundance, was his regular ranging ground.

His cabin stood in the bottoms near a place notorious for its snakes. They were his friends, so to speak. He caught them and with his bare hands he handled them as a butcher might handle links of sausage. He sold them, once in a while, to naturalists or showmen or zoölogical collectors; there was a taxidermist in Memphis who was an occasional customer of his. In the season he rendered down their soft fat and drew it off in bottles and retailed it; snake oil being held a sovereign remedy for rheumatism.

By such traffickings he was locally reputed to have made large sums of money. But he rarely spent any of this money; so he went by the name of miser, also. Well, in a way of speaking, he was a miser; zealously he coveted what he got and kept it hidden away in the chinking of his log shack. But he was nowhere near so well-off as the community gave him credit for being. The snake business is a confined and an uncertain business and restricted, moreover, to its special markets. A dealer's stock in trade may be plentiful, as in this case, but his patrons must be sought. To be exact, Snake Doctor had ninety-seven dollars in his cache.

But swearing to the truth of this on a stack of Bibles a mile high wouldn't have made the people in the Cashier Creek country have it so. Popular opinion insisted on multiplying his means and then adding noughts. Nor could you, by any argument, have won over his neighbours, white or black, to a fair estimate of the man's real self, which was that here merely was a poor, shy, lonely eccentric touched in the head by hot suns and perhaps by spells of recurrent swamp fevers.

They had contempt for him, but mixed in with the contempt was fear. To them he was to be

shunned as one having commerce on familiar footing with the most loathly and the most hated of all the creatures that crawl. There was a solitary exception to the current rule of prejudice; a single individual among them who had a human compassion for him and a measure of understanding and right appraisal of him. This individual, curiously enough, was a woman. She was a minority of one. We'll come to her presently. The rest had forgotten his proper name or else had never heard it. By their majority voice he was Ole Snake Doctor. They knew he was familiar with the ways of the cotton-mouth; they half believed he spoke its language.

In this particular region ordinary folks believed many things that weren't so. Superstition, sprouting out of ignorance, had twisted honest nature into a myriad of perverted and detractive shapes. The innocent little blue-streaked lizard was a "scorpyun" and its sting killed. A porous white stone found in the bellies of rutting deer was the only known cure for a mad dog's bite; clap it on the wound and it clung fast like a leech and sucked the poison out. You never saw many jay-birds in the woods between dinner time and dusk on a Friday because then nearly all the jay-birds had gone below to tell the news of a malicious world to their master, the Devil. You rarely could hit a rain crow with a rifle bullet because this slim, brown, nervous bird enjoyed the special protection of old Nick. If a snapping-turtle closed his jaws down on your flesh he wouldn't let go till it thundered. A breath of warm air blowing across your path on a cool night in the woods meant a "witch-hag" had passed that way.

Or take snakes: the Prophet of Old put the curse on them forever after when in his story of the Gar-

den he typified evil as a serpent; mankind has been enlarging the slander ever since. Moreover, in these parts, Caucasian ingenuity as regards snakes and their ways had overlaid a deep embroidery of ill repute upon an already rich background of African folklore. There was the hoop snake, which is mischievous and very deadly, and wears a deadly horn in its head, and there was the joint snake, which is a freak; both fabulous but both accepted as verities. All well-meaning snakes lay under the scandalous ban. Milk snakes, garter snakes, chicken snakes, puff snakes, blue racers and coachwhips were to be destroyed on sight; for their licking, forked tongues were "stingers" and dripped venom. If bitten by any snake your hope was first to drink all the raw whiskey you could get hold of. Or if within ten minutes after being bitten you clamped upon the wound the still-quivering halves of a young chicken which, while alive, had been split open with a hatchet or a knife, there yet was a chance for you. Lacking either of these cures or both of them, you must expire in torment. The bitten part would swell enormously; the poison, spreading and magnifying in your blood, would rack you with hideous pains; then swiftly it would reach your heart and you were gone.

Every sort of snake was tricky and guileful but the moccasin of the low grounds the most so of all. Kill a moccasin and spare its mate, and the mate would track you for miles, set on vengeance. It was the habit of the moccasin when meat was scarce to lie beneath the yonkerpads—pond lilies, a Northerner would call them—with its head shoved up among the broad green leaves and its mouth stretched wide and gaping, a living lure for such luckless birds and bees as mistook the snare of the

parted jaws with their white linings for a half-opened lily bud.

It was in accord with a quite natural law that the moccasin should be singled out for these special calumnies. Of the four venomous snakes of Temperate North America he is the least personable in looks and behaviour. He lacks the grace of his upland cousin, the copperhead, and he lacks the chivalry of his more distant kinsman, the rattler, which gives the enemy due warning before it strikes. He has none of the slimness of form nor patterned beauty of that streak of fanged lightning which lives in the palmetto scrubs, the coral snake. He is mournfully coloured and miserably shaped. The tones of dull creek mud and of stale creek slime mingle in his scrofulous mottlings. There is leprosy in the pale foxings of his lips, and dropsy in his bloat amidships. Only in the eyes of the taxidermist does he redeem himself for these manifold shortcomings. Being without bright tints to fade in the mounting, his stuffed skin needs no special varnishing to make it seem authentic. It is a poor compliment, perhaps, but his only one. On all other counts and for all other qualities he is copiously defamed and folks generally are prone to believe the worst of him.

Japhet Morner did, for one. For him, swamp water a-thrive with typhoid germs, or rancid corn pones in which the active seeds of pellagra lived, or mosquitoes carrying malaria and chancre in their bills, conveyed no sense of peril. The mosquitoes were to be endured, the water was to be drunk. And biliousness was the common lot of man, anyway. At least, in this neck of the woods it was. But snakes, now, were different; any snake and all snakes whatsoever. He accepted for truth all the hard things

that might be said of a snake. Certain other things he likewise believed, namely, that first, his nearest neighbour, Snake Doctor, held unwholesome communion with the cotton-mouths; that second, Snake Doctor had a treasure in money hid away in his shack—on this point he was very sure; and that third, the same Snake Doctor was entirely too fond of his, Japhet's, wife, Kizzie Morner, and she of him.

So it would appear he had a triplet of reasons for holding the other in disfavour—envy of him for his stored wealth, a gnawing suspicion from seeing in him a potential philanderer, and finally, that emotion of fearsome distrust bred out of stupidity and credulity which his kind were likely to have for any fellowman fashioned in different likeness from the run of them. That the shambling, soft-brained Snake Doctor was as sexless as a dirt clod would have been apparent to any straight-seeing observer; and it should have been as plainly visible even to this husband of hers that Kizzie Morner was a good woman and an honest one. But the jaundiced eye sees everything as yellow, and yellow is the colour for jealousy, too, and it suited Japhet Morner's mood to brew jealousy in his mind. Brewing it steadily there was strengthening his will for the putting through of a private project which for a long time he had been conning over in his thoughts. The issue came to a head on a certain day.

It was a day in that dreary season of the year when the birds have quit singing in the daytime and the locusts have started. Summer had sagged as though from the sheer exhaustion of its own wasted fervour. The lowlands woods had lost that poisonous green sprightliness which came to them in early April and lasted until the August hot spell set in.

Even the weeds, which in the bottoms grew rank and high and close-set, almost, as canes in a canebrake, were wilted and weary looking. The sun had come up that morning behind clouds. In the middle of the forenoon the clouds still banked together to hide the heavens, but the heat seemed intensified and pressed the unstirring air close down to the burnt earth. As Japhet Morner came out of the timber into the famished clearing behind his house the sweat dripped from him and he panted in the close, still humidity. His two dogs trailed him, their tongues lolling. One of them brushed against his leg. He hauled off and fetched the dog a sound kick in the ribs. He was not in a happy humour.

At sun-up, after a breakfast of cold scraps left from the night before, he had gone down to Cashier Creek to get a bait of sunfish. If he were lucky he might catch a catfish for his string. He had no luck, though. The creek was shrunk; it was lower than he ever remembered seeing it. The drought had sucked up its strength. At the shallows it was no more than a thin, sluggish trickle. In deeper places there scarcely was current enough to keep twigs and dropped leaves moving on the unrippled coffee-coloured surface.

Japhet fished and fished and was rewarded with no nibbles whatsoever; seemingly, even the littlest fishes were too languid to bite at the worms he dangled for them in likely spots. He came downstream to the Big Hole, so called, where, an eighth of a mile up from Snake Doctor's shanty, the creek widened to thrice its usual breadth. Here a tight wedge of driftwood blocked the waters. Each successive freshet added flotsam to the rude dam—lost cross-ties, uprooted trees, corn stalks, chips, dead weeds,

sticks. Ordinarily this lesser riffle would cover the pool so thickly that, with the top dressing of cream-coloured foam, there was created the simulation of a solid footing; a stranger might have been pardoned for believing he could walk across and keep dryshod. But now all here was clear of gently eddying débris. The consumed stream, instead of slapping against the spanning driftage, ran under it with an oozy, guzzling sound. Directly in the middle there was a busy little whirlpool, funnelling downward.

On one of the lowermost of the bared logs a cotton-mouth was twisted up, taking his ease in the congenial fever warmth. He was a big fat one—fully two feet long and as thick through his girth as a boy's arm. From the bank edge above Japhet saw him and looked about for something to throw at him. In a section where gravel is rare and all rock formations are buried a hundred feet down under the silt, the verb "to stone" is neither used nor known. Your weapon invariably is a "chunk" and with it—a hard clod or a lump of wood or whatever it is—you "chunk" away at your target. The man found a sizable missile, a heavy, half-rotted sycamore bough, and he snapped it off to suitable length and flung it, twirling, at the motionless mark. His aim was good. The stricken snake flapped out of coil and dragged its broken loops from sight into an interlacing of naked limbs on the farther side of its log. The stick bounced hard and splashed in the pool. Japhet saw how then it swirled around and around and then, briskly, was sucked beneath the jam. With a quickened curiosity he moved downstream a rod or two and waited. Although the jam was now, so to speak, a suspension bridge, and in places stood inches clear

of the water, the stick did not emerge into view below it. No drift showed there, either; the creek for a space flowed clear of rubbish. Evidently, objects caught in that small whirlpool above were carried in and under to lodge and be held fast by some submerged trap-work of soaked and sunken limbs. Probably they would stay there for months, perhaps stay there always. Turning the matter of the phenomenon over in his mind, he flung away his bait can, spun his fishing cane so that the line wrapped around it, and made off through the woods for his home, nearly a mile away. The two dogs racked along at his heels. Coming out of the woods one of them made the mistake of nudging him.

Having disciplined the scrooging dog with his boot toe he slouched out into the six-acre "dead'nin'." His puny patch of corn, for lack of the hoe, was smothering in weeds. In bare spots where the thin soil was washed so close down to the underlying clay-pan that here not even weeds would sprout, the crawfish had pushed up their conical watch towers of dried mud. Tall ash boles, girdled and dead, threw foreshortened shadows across the clearing—shadows such as gallows trees might cast. His house, of two rooms and built of unpainted up-and-down planking, squatted in the inadequate shade of a stunted chinaberry tree. A well was at one corner. There was no flower bed, no truck patch, no fencing. Across the open space, with the heat waves dancing before him, the outlines of the house seemed to waver and twist like an object seen through smoke. It stood a foot from the earth on log props. Because of seepage there were no cellars in this neighbourhood. The inevitable dogs lived under the houses and bred their fleas there, and the hogs, too, if so be a house owner had any hogs.

It was nearly noon now. His wife, in a skimpy blue frock open at the throat, was cooking the mid-day meal, the principal meal of the three. He came up to the door and she, looking up from the cook stove where she was turning the strips of sizzling fat meat in the skillet, saw the look on his face. Her mouth twitched apprehensively. By the signs she knew when he was in one of his tantrums.

"Ketch anything, Jafe?" she asked, nervously.

"Ketch anything this weather?—whut'd you expect I'd ketch?" From his voice it might be figured that, vicariously, he blamed her for the failure of his expedition.

He hunkered down on the doorstep, his fishing pole still in his hands.

"That pore old Mist' Rives come by here a spell ago mighty nigh shook to pieces with a chill," she said, after a bit.

"Oh, he come by, did he?" His tone, purposely, was disarming. "Well, did he come in?"

"Jes' fur a minute."

"Jes' fur a minute, heh? And whut did he want?"

"He wanted could I give him somethin' fur his ailment. He jes' about could drag one sorry foot before the other—barely could make it up here from his place. I reckon he must be down in bed with the fever by now; I could tell by the touch it wuz risin' in him when he left here and started back home ag'in. It'll be mighty pitiful, him down flat of his back and nobody there to do nothin' fur his comfort. I give him a dos't out of our Butler's Ager Drops. I would 'a' give him a little smidgin' of lickin' only—only——" She left the sentence unfinished. "That pore shackly Mist' Rives, he—— Oh, please don't, Jafe!"

Turning, he had cut viciously at her with the long cane. She shrank back as it whipped through the air, and took the lashing stroke on her forearm, thrown up to fend off the blow.

"Mist' Rives! Mist' Rives!" He mimicked her, furiously. "How many times I got to tell you that there old hoodoo's name is Snake Doctor? Him that'd skin a louse fur its hide and taller and you callin' him 'Mist' Rives!' You'll be callin' him 'Honey' and 'Sugar' next without I learn you better. Pet names, huh? Well, I aim to learn you."

She flinched at the threat, rubbing the welt on her skin; but he made no effort to strike her again. He sat glowering, saying nothing at all as she made hurry to dish up the food and put it before him; she hoped the weight of victuals in his stomach might dull the edge of his temper. For her part, she had the wisdom to keep silent, too. She ate on her feet, serving him between bites and sups, as was the rule in this household.

After dinner he stretched himself on the floor of the inner room. But he did not sleep. He was busy with his thoughts. One thing he had seen that day, and another thing he had heard—he was adding them together, as the first sum in a squalid equation. She drew a cane-bottom chair outdoors and sat under the chinaberry tree, fanning herself and "dipping" snuff with a peach twig which she scoured back and forth on her gums. After a little while she was driven into the kitchen. It began to rain in sharp, violent showers. The rain made the house inside no cooler; merely changed it from a bake-oven to a putrid steambox.

It was getting along toward four o'clock before Japhet emerged from the front room. He drew on

his heavy knee-length boots, which he had removed before lying down, and laced them up. This done, he spoke to her for the first time since noon.

"Where's that there vi'l of licker?" he said. "Fetch it here to me."

They kept a small store of whiskey by them—all in that district did the same—for chills and possible snake bites. She brought him a pint flask nearly full and he shoved it into his hip pocket. Then immediately, as though moved by a fresh idea, he hauled it out again and put it down on the kitchen table.

"Come to think about it," he said, "I won't be needin' to tote no sperrits along with me where I'm goin'. Cotton-mouths is all down in the slashes or else along the creek, and where I'll be all this evenin' is up on Bailey's Ridge in the high ground."

He was not given to favouring her with explanations of his motives or accounts of his movements. This departure from fixed habit emboldened his wife to put a question.

"Fixin' to go shootin', Jafe?" she asked, timidly.

"I aim to gun me a chance of young squirrels 'twixt now and dusk time. I heard 'em barkin' all 'round me this mornin'. Ef they're that plenty in the low ground they'll be out thicker'n hops after the mulberries and the young hick'ry nuts up Bailey's Ridge."

He took up his single-shot rifle where it stood in a corner, and from an opened box on a shelf scooped a handful of brass shells. Then he went outside and tied up both his dogs. One was a hound, good for hunting rabbits. It was proper that he should be left behind. But the smaller dog, a black mongrel, was a trained squirrel dog. As his wife stood in the doorway, Japhet read the dumb curiosity which her face expressed.

"With the leaves ez thick ez the way they air, still huntin' is best this time o' year," he explained. "So I won't be needin' Gyp. Don't let neither one of 'em gnaw hisself loose and follow after me. Set me up a snack of cold supper on a shelf. Likely I won't git back till its plum' nighttime—gunnin' fur them squirrels is best jes' before dark, and I'll be away off yonder at the fur end of the Ridge, three miles from here, when I git ready to start back. 'Taint ez ef I wuz rangin' in the low ground."

He turned north through the struggling corn rows and in a minute was gone from her sight into the dripping woods. He kept on going north for nearly a mile until he came to where a wild red mulberry tree stood in a small natural opening. Some of the overripe fruit, blackened and shrivelled, still clung to the boughs; and where there are mulberries in the summer woods, there squirrels almost certainly will likewise be. Very neatly he shot two young grays through their heads. Japhet was a master marksman. It was his only gentlemanly accomplishment. In all other respects he was just plain white trash, as one of his negro neighbours would have phrased it—behind Japhet's back. But unsuspected by any who knew him, he had a quality of mind which is denied many of his class—an imagination. It was in excellent working order this day. He now was proving that it was.

He tied the brained squirrels together and swung them, tails downward, over a strap of his suspenders. If needed, they were to be evidence in his behalf—part of his alibi. Next he sat down under a tree awhile. He sat out two brisk showers with the intervals between them. Then, getting up, he set off, keeping always to the deeper woodlands, in

a swing which would bring him down Bailey's Branch, now wasted to a succession of lazy dribbles, and along the skirts of Little Cypress Slash to the sunken flats edging Cashier Creek. The arc of his swing was wide. It took him all of two hours, travelling carefully and without haste through the steamy coverts, to reach the point he aimed for.

He came to halt, cautiously and well sheltered, behind the farthestmost fringes of a little jungle of haw bushes where the diminishing woods frayed out in a sort of green peninsula fifty yards or so back of Snake Doctor's cabin. This was his chosen destination, so here he squatted himself down in a nest of sodden leaves and grass to wait. It had begun to shower again, good and hard. He was drenched. No matter, though; he figured he would not have so very long to wait. As it turned out he didn't.

There was no house dog to come nosing him out and barking an alarm. That Snake Doctor owned no dog would have marked him, in this part of the land, as a person totally different from his fellows, even had there been lacking other points of variance. What Snake Doctor did own was a mare, or the ruins of one. She was housed in a log crib a few rods behind the only slightly larger log cabin of her owner. Where he stooped, Japhet could hear her stirring restlessly in her stall. He might have seen her through the cracks between the logs of her shelter except for a brush fence which bounded the small weed-grown clearing.

His plan was simple enough and yet, as he saw it, fault-proof. Feeding time was at hand; soon Snake Doctor, ailing though he was, surely would be coming out from his cabin to bait the old rack-of-bones. Japhet counted on this. He'd get him then, first

pop. He'd teach him what the costs were of col-leagu-ing with another man's lawful wedded wife, and the lesson would be the death of him. At a half crouch in his ambush, Japhet told himself that his motive was jealousy; that he was here as a white man and an injured husband for the satisfaction of his personal honour and in the defense of his threatened threshold. By a conscious effort of his will he kept in the background of his mind the other purpose that had brought him on this errand. It had to do with money—with Snake Doctor's hoarded money.

The next step after the principal act would be to dispose of the body. That should be easy. He could carry the meagre frame over his shoulder for a mile, if need be. And he wouldn't have to carry it for a mile, either—only as far as the Big Hole; then lower the burden into the water and let it slip in under the log jam. The chunk he had killed the moccasin with had stayed under there, skinny old Snake Doctor would stay there, too. This done, he would come back here to the cabin and hunt out the hidden treasure. He figured it shouldn't take him a great while to find it; he already had a sort of notion as to its whereabouts, a strong clew to start on. Having found it he would circle back up through the woods, reëntering his field from the upper or northern side, with two squirrels flapping his flank for proof that he had been hunting on Bailey's Ridge. Suspicion never could touch him. Why should it?

He counted on the rain which was now falling to wipe out his tracks in Snake Doctor's horse lot. Any-how, it probably would be days or weeks before any one missed the hermit and made search for him; in that time the tracks would have vanished, rain or no.

It was greatly in his favour that when Snake Doctor was from home, or supposed to be, folks religiously refrained from setting foot on the premises. They mightily feared the cotton-mouths with which the recluse was reputed to consort. There was even a story that Snake Doctor kept for a watchman in his house the granddaddy of all created cotton-mouths and set this monster on guard when he stirred abroad. So he needed no locks on his doors nor bar for his single window, the legend amply protecting his belongings in his absences.

Ten minutes passed, fifteen, and Japhet was up on his knees, his rifle at poise, his eyes vigilant through the tops of the weeds which fringed the ambushade. Something or other—something quick and furtive—stirred behind him. Startled, he turned his head, saw that the disturber was a belated catbird, and looked front again. In that brief space of time the victim had come into sight. Through the rain and the slackening daylight he could see, above the ragged top of the intervening brush fence, the white patch of Snake Doctor's lippy old straw hat and below the hat the folds of a dark coat drawn over a pair of hunched narrow shoulders as the wearer of these garments came briskly toward the stable, which meant also toward him. At this distance he could'nt miss.

Nor did he. At the shot, the figure jerked backward, then went over face forward. The killer rose upright, exultation contending with tautened nerves within him. He stole up to the fence, set a foot in the tangled brushwood with intent to climb it, and then, at what he saw, froze into a poised shape of terror, his eyes bulging, his mouth opened in a square shape, and his rifle dropping from his twitching fingers.

He had just killed Snake Doctor—killed him dead with a 32-calibre slug through the head. And here on his doorsill stood Snake Doctor, whole and sound, and staring at him! And now, Snake Doctor, dead by all rights and rules, yet living, was uttering a cry and starting out of the doorway toward him.

Japhet Morner had sucked in superstitions with his mother's milk. He believed in "ha'nts," in "witch-hags" and "sperrits," believed in "conjures" and "charms" and ghosts and hoopsnakes; believed that those under the favour of infernal forces might be killed only with a bullet molded from virgin silver. And his mistake was, he had used lead out of a brass shell.

Power of motion returned to him. He threw himself backward and whirled and ran into the deep of the darkening woods, making whimpering, whining sounds like a thrashed puppy as he went.

Terror rode him into the dense timber. Exhaustion, dizziness, the feeling that he must get under the shelter of a sound roof, must have the protection of four walls about him, brought Japhet Morner out again; this was along toward midnight. The rain had ceased; the moon was trying to come forth. A short distance southeast of his place he struck a dirt road which would lead him there. Beyond the next bend he would be in sight of home.

Around the turn he saw coming toward him a joggling light—a lantern hung on a buggy or light wagon, he figured—and heard the creak of wheels turning in the muddied softness. Nameless horrors had made a fugitive of him; the fugitive instinct still possessed him. He flattened down in a clump of bushes to hide until the traveller passed.

Moving briskly, the rig was almost opposite him when, from the other direction—the same direction he had been following—came a call:

“Hello there!—who’s joggin’?”

“Whoa! Stiddy, boy!” Whoever was driving pulled up his horse, which had shied at the sudden hail. “Me—Davis Ware,” he answered back. “That you, Tip Bailey?”

“Yep, hoofin’ it out from the Junction, and tolerable tired, if anybody should ask you. What’s bringin’ you out this hour of night, Davis—somebody sick?”

“Sick nothin’! There’s been hell poppin’ in these bottoms to-night.”

Behind the weed screen ten feet away the listener stiffened, his blood drumming in him. He knew the speakers, both neighbours of his, one of them a local leader. The foot passenger hurried up alongside the buggy; his face, inquisitive and alarmed, showed in the dim circlet of lantern light.

“What do you mean?”

“A killin’—that’s what I mean. An abominable, cold-blooded killin’ ef ever there wuz one.”

“God! Who’s been killed?”

“I’m fixin’ to tell you, man. It happened jes’ shortly before dusk at ole Snake Doctor’s place.”

“Was it him was killed?”

“Gimme time, can’t you?” This Ware was one who must tell his tale his own way or not at all. “It seems like Snake Doctor’s been chillin’ lately. He wuz purty bad off to-day—I mean yistiddy. And so, right after supper time when the rain wuz lullin’ a little, Mizz Kizzie Morner she footed it down from her place to his’n, fetchin’ some physic with her and a plate of hot vittles fur him. It seems like

she wuzn't feared to go there. I'd 'a' been, I'll own up, but she wuzn't. Well, purty soon after she got there it seems like he tried to git up out of his bed to go feed that old crow-bait sorrel nag of his'n. It had started in ag'in by then, pourin' down hard, and so she made him stay where he wuz. And she put on his old hat and throwed his old coat round her to keep off the wust of the wet, and she started out of the back door to do the feedin'. And no more'n she'd got outside in the lot than a shot come from the aidge of the woods right over the fence and down she went with a bullet through her brains."

"God's sake! Dead?"

"No, not dead, but same ez dead. She barely wuz breathin' here not ten minutes ago when I left her house. Old Doctor Bradshaw, he's there with her now and he says it's a miracle she's lasted this long. Well, it seems like Snake Doctor jumped up at the shot and run out to see whut had happened and there she lay a-welterin'. And him—well, he's been takin' on like all possessed ever since. I wouldn't 'a' believed he could 'a' had so much feelin' in him ef I hadn't seen him with my own eyes. It wuz him run for help, though—he did have sense enough left to do that. He found me in my tobacco patch and I dropped everything and took out fur there, and a bunch of us picked her up and toted her home on a wagon bed. She's shot in the left side of the head just over the temple; the bullet went clean through and come out on the right side.

"But who did it?"

"I'm comin' to that. 'Twuz that low-flung husband of hers done it—that's who. It seems like he must 'a' followed her down to Snake Doctor's and laid in wait fur her and felled her ez she come out.

Gawd knows why onless 'twuz jes' pure pizen meanness."

"The murderin' dog! They're certain 'twas him, then?"

"Shore ez gun's iron 'twuz him. Snake Doctor ketched a quick look at him over the fence ez he darted off. And right there they found his rifle where he'd dropped it before he whirl't and run—fool thing fur him to do—and I seen his tracks myself, in the soft ground, goin' and comin', and where he must 'a' stood when he fired. I seen 'em by lantern light after I got there—and fully half a dozen others did, too. There's a long red streak on her arm where he must 'a' been whuppin' her durin' the day."

"Hangin's a sight too good! Did they catch him?"

"No, but they will. Some thinks he's made fur the slashes and hid out there—his tracks led off that way. There'll be a line of men throwed all the way round Little Cypress before sun-up. They're organizin' the posse at the Morner place."

"Sheriff got there yet?"

"No, but he's due by daylight or sooner. They telephoned in from Gallup's Mills to him and he's already started fur here with his pack of dogs. The trail ought to lay good, ground bein' damp the way it is. Ole Snake Doctor he's carryin' on and ravin' round, sayin' the Lord's goin' to strike the murderer down in his tracks. But I'm puttin' my main dependence on them bloodhounds—on them first, and then mebbe on a good stout plough line and the limb of a tree. Oh, they'll ketch him, and when they do I 'low to be there! I'm jes' puttin' out fur my place to roust out my oldest boy and fetch him back with me. There's a good size crowd already."

"Don't let me hold you up any longer, then," said the pedestrian, a deadly grimness in his tone. "I'm ready now—got a pistol here in my hip pocket. That poor thing! She always was a good-hearted, hard-workin' woman and mightily put upon. As for Jafe Morner—well, if I should be so lucky as to be the one to jump him out of the sticks, I'm goin' to shoot first and ask questions afterwards. I'll be waitin' there at Morner's, Davis."

He broke into a half run.

In the patchy moonlight which sifted through the shredding rain clouds Snake Doctor's house made a black square against the lesser blackness of its background. To it, panting in his haste, came the assassin, running. He feared the place—to the bottom of his desperate soul he feared it—but a fear yet greater was driving him hither. Previously it has been stated that this man had a powerful imagination. To a literate person it might have been a gift. To him, in this emergency, it was a curse. It set his sore and smitten nerves on end; still, it honed his wits to a sharper edge.

What he overheard back there on the dirt road had remodelled his formless flight into a shaped intent. Now he had to deal, not with phantoms and haunting apparitions, but with tangible dangers; dangers not less frightful than those others perhaps, but to be coped with and—if his luck held—outwitted by physical devices. There was no remorse in him. After all, he fairly well was suited by the outcome of his mistake; getting safely away was what concerned him. In his present plight, weaponless, without a cent in his pocket, with the countryside rousing to hunt him, escape was out of prospect. But with money to buy his way along he'd

have a good chance. Let the sheriff come on with his dogs, then, let the mob form, with their talk of a rope and cold lead. With any sort of break he'd best them. He would strike through the deep timber for the river; in six hours of steady travelling he could make it. At the river he would hire a shanty-boater to ferry him cross to the Arkansas side; in some town over there buy clothes and get his hair cut; then catch a train and travel as far west or as far south as the steam-cars would take him. And it was Snake Doctor's cash that would buy the way for him! He had little time, though.

Mighty little. He knew the interior arrangements of Snake Doctor's one room—the pallet in this corner, the fireplace in that, the chair and table drawn out on the sagging floor. In the one spying visit he ever had paid Snake Doctor two weeks before, when this shooting scheme first formed in his mind, he had noted these things in detail. He had marked also the very spot where he felt certain the place of concealment for the money was. All through his stay Snake Doctor, tremulous and plainly apprehensive, had manœuvred to keep between the unbidden, unwelcome caller and the corner where his comforters and blankets were placed. Also, the recluse's eyes had helped to betray him; time and time again they had turned nervously to the wall just beyond and above the bedding, a point, say, five or six feet above it. Just about there, probably in a concealed gap between or behind the logs, the loot surely must be.

He thrust through the planked door, sagging on its leather hinges, and crossed directly to the fireplace. There was no fire in it, but, stooping and fumbling with his hands he found chips there ready to be kindled, and under the chips scraps of paper—

good! He needed a light of sorts to search by. He had matches in his pocket, corked in a bottle, water-tight. He got them out as quickly as his shaking fingers would let him. There were only four of them. One after another he struck them. But the paper was damp from rain coming down the mud chimney, and no fire caught until the fourth and last match had been struck. Then it merely flickered; it ran slowly along the edge of the charring paper, threatening to go out.

All right, then, let it go out if it wanted to. He could see in the dark as well as the next one, and had hands to feel with. He made for the corner diagonally across the cabin and ran his hands swiftly along the exposed upper surface of a certain log, probing for any deep depressions in the rotted bark adhering to it, nicking the dried clay mortar with his nails. He tried that log without result, started on the log above it—and sucked in his breath as loose scraps of bark fell away at his touch from where they covered a niche in the joining. The cavity thus exposed was roughly circular in shape, the diameter, about, of a man's arm; he could tell that by fingering its edges. This must be the hole. Greedily he thrust his right hand in. It touched something—something slick and firm and smooth—and there came a quick darting sting as pointed things, sharp and keen, jabbed his thumb, tearing the skin as he jerked his hand out.

In that same breath the feeble flame in the fireplace caught well and flared up, its blaze filling the cabin with a wavery, unreliable radiance. Japhet Morner, flinging his hand up before his face, saw by that red brightness that on the inner side of his thumb were two tiny torn punctures, half an inch

apart, from which drops of blood had started; and then, on beyond, two feet away, at the level of his stricken eyes he saw the forepart of a thick snake, its hideous dull-marked head lifted and thrust back just within the round of the orifice, its mouth wide open, with the cottony linings revealed, its neck taut and curved as though ready to strike again.

He gave a strangled, slobbering howl and leaped to the other side of the room, sobbing, grasping, uttering fragments of formless sound. The blood pumped and spurted from his flinched thumb to prove the wounds though minute were deep.

He must have whiskey to drink or the cloven, hot carcass of a freshly killed chicken to bind fast to the bite, or he was done for. At his house half a mile away was whiskey and there chickens were asleep on their roost. He might make it. He whirled about, then recoiled as though a hard blow had stopped him. He couldn't go where men were assembling, ready and anxious to stretch his neck for him.

Now then, his brain told him that, already and thus soon, quick pangs were leaping down his thumb, through his hand, flaming along his wrist and up his arm. The poison must be racing in his veins, mounting and growing, as he had heard it would. He had a feeling that his hand was swelling, making the skin tighter and tighter. There was no help, and even did help come now it would come too late. He howled and dropped and rolled on the floor.

Up in the creviced wall the forward length of the snake showed, its head still guardingly reared on its slim neck, its lidless pale eyes, like twin bits of blurred glazing, aglow in the shifting firelight.

He got upon his feet, and a terrific pain struck at his heart, squeezing and wringing it. His throat

closed and he choked. A second pain twisted his heart.

With a drunken leap he cleared the sill of the rear doorway, ran in a wavering course a few strides out across the horse lot and then, as his knees gave way under him, he pitched forward on his face, his lolled mouth full of weeds and muddy grass stems. The cramping fingers of his outstretched right hand almost touched a reddish black smear where the earth was trampled and the grass flattened down.

“Good reddance, by gravy! I’d call it that; wouldn’t you, doc?”

The speaker was driving Doctor Bradshaw back to his home near Gallup’s Mills. The other raised his head wearily. He had been up all night and he was an old man.

“Well,” he said, “I’d not have wished the death he died on any man, no matter what he’d done to deserve it. Yet I reckon there was a sort of rough justice in it, too. Anyway, we’ve been saved a lynching or else a regular hanging. And one would have been a scandal on the county and the other an expense to the taxpayers. Maybe you have got the right idea about it, Jim Meloan.

“I’m looking at it more from the professional point of view. I’ve had two strange experiences this past night, Jim. I’ve seen an under-nourished, sickly woman, after being shot through the brain, linger for nearly seven hours before dying, and I’ve examined the body of a man who’d been killed by a snake bite—killed good and quick, too, judging by the evidences.”

“Well, doc, ain’t that the way a cotton-mouth always does kill a man—sudden like? I’ve always heard tell——”

"Never mind what you've heard," said the old doctor; he was cross because he was sleepy. "I'm going by the facts, not by fairy tales. I was born and raised down here, and I've been practising medicine in this county for going on forty-six years. And I tell you that in all my life I've never known of but two or three people actually being bitten by water moccasins, and until this morning early I never had personal knowledge of anybody at all dying from the bite of any kind of snake. Horses?—well, yes. Dogs?—maybe so. But not a human being.

"Still, the proof is clear enough in this case. I think I'll write a paper about it for the next meeting of the State Medical Society. The places where the fangs nipped him were right there in the ball of his thumb—two bloody deep little scratches, side by side. And then there was that look on his face—*ugh!* I'm fairly hardened, but I'm not going to forget Jafe Morner's face in a hurry. He died quick, I'd say offhand, but he died hard, too; I'll swear to that part of it. Well, he was the kind who likely would flicker out pretty brisk under certain circumstances. Ever notice the colour of his skin and those heavy pouches under his eyes? Bad whiskey and bad food and swamp fevers didn't put those signs on him. The late Japhet had a rotten bad heart, Jimmy."

"He shorely did," agreed Meloan, fervently. "Yistiddy proved that."

"I don't mean exactly in that sense," explained the physician. "I mean there was an organic weakness. Curious thing, though, there was no swelling round the wounds nor any swelling in his hand or arm; no noticeable blotching of the skin, either. And yet, if there's anything in the accepted theories of the toxic effects of a venomous snake's bite, those

conditions should have been marked. Oh, I'll have quite a paper to read before the Society!"

"Mebbe the swellin' had done went down before you got to him," suggested the morbidly interested farmer.

"No, he couldn't have been dead more than a short while when they went down there to set the dogs on the trail and found him; Sheriff Gill tells me he was still warm. And I was there not ten minutes after that. It's a mighty unusual case—several features about it that puzzle me. F'rinstance now, what about the snake that gashed him? Which-away did it come from beforehand and where did it head for afterwards? I didn't see any snake tracks in the ground close to where he was laying—I looked for 'em, too. Still, the horse lot was pretty well trompled. Now, that poor forlorn old creature that you people in this neighborhood call Snake Doctor, he's got his own pet theory about it. He keeps on saying it was the vengeance of the Lord falling upon a red-handed murderer. He thinks the fellow was drawn back to the seat of his crime—well, that might be so; I've heard of such things before—and that the Divine Wrath lit on him. But if I was him I'd be poking under the stable or the cabin for a whopping big snake.

"He tells me, though—and he ought to be an authority on the subject if anybody is—he tells me that a water moccasin never travels many yards away from the water and that nighttimes they always den up somewhere, being cold-blooded creatures that love the sunshine. And on top of that he swears to me that there never have been any moccasins close about his diggin's unless he'd brought 'em there dead or else as prisoners in a sack."

"Why, looky here, doc," broke in Meloan, "he lied to you, then. There's always been a sayin' round here that Snake Doctor kept a huge big cotton-mouth right with him in his house all the time!"

"Yes, that's true. I saw it myself, not an hour ago," said the doctor, smiling a little. "I reckon the old fellow's smarter than folks give him credit for being. He took me in his shack and showed it to me."

"But I thought you jes' now said——"

"Wait till I finish. He took me in and showed it to me, just as I'm telling you. But it was deader than Hector. It was a stuffed snake—with glass eyes and all. It seems a professional taxidermist who was up here from Memphis some years ago mounted it for our eccentric friend. Well, I'll tell the world he made a good job of it. Lifelike?—you bet you! See it in a poor light and you'd almost be ready to swear you saw it move its head. I wouldn't have the thing round me for any amount of money. But it seems this old fellow had a purpose in keeping it.

"That point came out in a sort of a peculiar way, too. It's been common gossip, I understand, that Snake Doctor had a store of money laid by. No doubt you've heard exaggerated stories about the size of his wad; but I'm prepared to tell you it wasn't much—just under a hundred dollars, all told. After he'd calmed down he told me he didn't crave to keep it any more. He said he wanted it spent, paying for a proper funeral for that poor woman—said she was the only friend he'd had in the world; the only one that ever gave him a kind look or a kind word. So he asked me and Tip Bailey to take charge of it and then he took me in his shanty and got it out

from the secret place where he'd kept it hid. It was tucked down in behind a break in the chinking between two of the side logs. And—listen to this, Jim—right in front of it, just back inside the mouth of the opening, he'd set that stuffed cotton-mouth of his, figuring that the bare sight of it, with its neck all bent like as if it was fixing to lunge, and its jaws wide open, would kind of discourage anybody who might take a notion to start exploring in there.

“And then, for a further precaution—oh, he's plenty smart in his way!—he'd gone and lined the inside of the hole all round the edges and halfway down to the bottom with coils of barbed wire, with the points sticking up every which-a-way. Anybody who rammed his hand in there suddenly would certainly get gaffed. Not that anybody would who'd seen the snake first.”

The old doctor yawned heavily. “Purty cute little notion, I'd call it.”

QUESTIONS

1. Describe the setting.
2. Compare moccasin snakes with three other venomous North American snakes.
3. How is Snake Doctor regarded in the community?
4. What was the nature of the Morner's home life?
5. To what extent has Japhet Morner a cause to be jealous of Snake Doctor?
6. What type of woman was Mrs. Morner?
7. What plans does Morner make for killing Snake Doctor? When does he first conceive the idea?
8. Explain in what manner Japhet Morner came to shoot his wife instead of Snake Doctor.
9. What caused him to abandon his carefully formed plan, following the murder?
10. Describe the conversation he overhears between Davis Ware and Tip Bailey.

11. What is the real cause of Japhet Morner's death? Does this seem possible?
12. What local superstitions do you find described in this story?
13. Is it in Cobb's usual style?
14. For what type of fiction is Mr. Cobb best known?
15. Contrast "Snake Doctor" with "Footfalls." Show how the characters, setting, and style differ in these two stories.
16. Upon what does Cobb rely for effect? Steele?
17. Rewrite the story in your own manner. (About 300 words.)
18. What does this task prove to you regarding Cobb's ability as a story writer.

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